

New apps to help manage beef herds

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LINCOLN—Two new University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension beef apps will help producers manage their beef cow herds better.

NUBeef-BCS and NUBeef-UTS are available in the Google Play and Apple App Store, said Rick Rasby, UNL Extension beef specialist, who developed the app along with UNL EdMedia's Mark Hendricks.

NUBeef-UTS is an udder and teat scoring app. It based on the Beef Improvement Federations' scoring system and allows producers to score teats and udders against the BIF standard.

NUBeef-BCS allows producers to visually assess their cow herd using a number system that objectively describes the amount of condition or fat reserve of the animal.

"When you look at the nutrition program, it is one of the greatest costs for the cow calf producer. The way we monitor that program is through body condition of the herd," Rasby said. Body condition score describes the relative fatness of a cow based on a nine point scale.

When using the NUBeef-BCS app, producers can simply take photos of their beef cows and then score cows at important times throughout the year, such as at weaning and before the start of calving and breeding season.

Taking pictures of the same cow multiple times throughout the year allows producers to better manage the herd, Rasby said.

"If you are unsure of a body condition score of a cow, there also is a guide and pictures with the app that can be your guide," Rasby said.

He said one of the challenges during winter is producers want to score body conditions, but

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cows have their winter hair coats. The app includes drawings of cows in different body condition scores that also can help with that.

Calving season is the perfect time to start using the app, Rasby said.

He said the app also is good for hired hands to use to score cows and then go over conditions with the cattle manager so that employee and manager are on the same page.

An added component to the app is an education component.

“It is a must for instructors teaching beef cow management concepts to students at all levels, high school junior college and four-year colleges,” Rasby said.

The app has a group of cows that have already been body condition scored that can be pulled up and used to practice scoring.

“This is outstanding tool that anyone can learn to use – from beef producers to teachers and student,” he said.

Like the BCS app, the NUBeef-UTS app works by matching photos against standards.

Cows with poor teat and udder quality can pose problems for their calf to suck. This information will allow producers to monitor these scores and perhaps use it as culling criteria in the future.

This app also has a learning component useful for educators.

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“Both these apps will help with management strategies with the beef cow herd and the learning component is really cool,” Rasby said.