



# Ranching Operations in California: A Year in the Life of a Cow

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# Introduction



- Fifth generation cattle rancher in the Bay Area – Koopmann Livestock / Walking C Livestock
- Public Land Rangelands Manager/Ecologist – Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
- Professional Rangeland Consultant – Koopmann Rangeland Consulting



## Overview



- Provide Background – Basic information regarding typical livestock operations found throughout California with a focus on the Central Coast.
- Better understand today's presentations:
  - Economics, infrastructure, and challenges faced by ranchers in grazing for conservation.

# CALIFORNIA OPERATIONS



- Two (2) Primary Types of Grazing Operations Common to California:



Cow/Calf Pair



Stocker

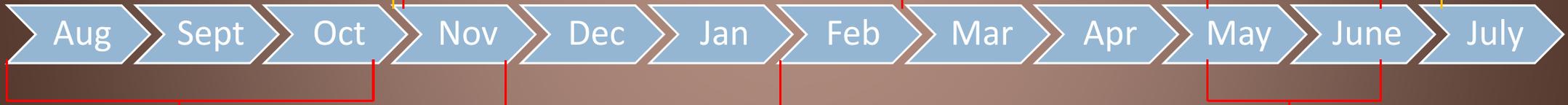
A mature cow or a mature cow with a nursing calf at her side prior to weaning. The operator retains the mature cow and sells off a weaned calf weighing 400-700 pounds annually.

- Profit is obtained by selling the calves on a per pound basis.
- Most often grazed year-round but sometimes grazed seasonally.
- Fall Calving or Spring Calving.

## Cow/Calf Pairs: What are they?



# Year-Round Operation (Fall Calving)



# Seasonal Operation (Fall Calving)



Seasonal  
Grazing on  
annual  
rangeland



Weaned calves, typically 8-16 months of age weighing between 400 and 900 pounds (teenagers).

- Pounds are profit. The more weight they gain, the more money they earn.
- Grazed seasonally (December-June)
- Multiple types of stocker operations:

Stocker:  
What are they?



# Stocker Operations:



## ❖ Taking cattle in on the gain:

- ❖ Contract with outside rancher to take in/run their stocker cattle for the season. Paid pre-determined per/lb rate for weight gained during the season or paid per head.

## ❖ Seasoning your owned weaned calves:

- ❖ Retain your weaned calves from your owned cows and 'season' them or add additional weight before sale.
- ❖ More Weight = More Money (Usually)
- ❖ Contract with Feeder – deliver cattle at a specific weight

## ❖ Purchase of outside cattle:

- ❖ Purchase weaned calves and put them on pasture for the season to gain weight before re-selling them.

# Stocker Operations:



A weaned heifer calf retained for the purpose of building and improving your cow herd and replacing cull cows. Begin around 600 pounds and carried until mature cow.

- Retained at the time of weaning and carried over similar to stocker cattle.
  - Stockers typically Dec-Jun
  - Heifers carried through summer/fall
- Bred in the fall as a yearling (1 year old).
- Carried through spring/summer until calving the following fall similar to cows.

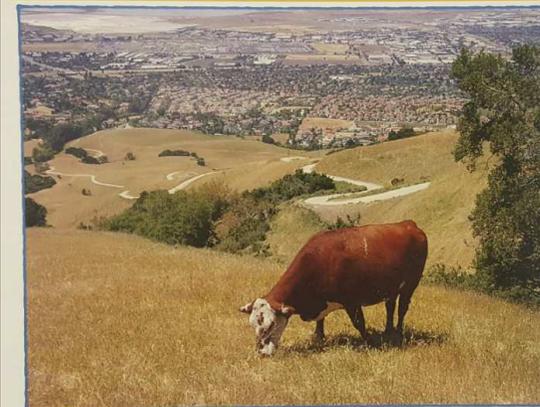
## Replacement Heifers: What are they?



- A year in the life of a beef cow
- Sharing Open Space with Grazing Livestock
- Benefits of Livestock Grazing on CA Annual Grasslands
- Grazing Systems Management
- Cattle, Sheep, Goats, and Horses
- Caring for Cattle and Sheep
- Water Sources, Wetlands, Riparian Areas
- Bay Area Ranching Heritage
- Public Lands – Ranching Viability

## Understanding Working Rangelands

Information for Land Managers, Decision Makers, and Interpreters



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# Questions

Thank you!

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