

# Rangeland Conservation Requires Profitable Ranching Operations

Thank you photographers!



Monterey County Water Resources Agency

September 5, 2019 Paso Robles

Devii R. Rao, Donald Stewart, and Daniel A. Sumner

# Native Grasses



# Native Wildflowers



# California Red-Legged Frog



Photo © 1998 Joyce Gross

# Grassland Songbird Species



**Grasshopper Sparrow**



**Savannah Sparrow**



**Western Meadowlark**



**Horned Lark**

Data presented here are draft numbers.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
AGRICULTURAL ISSUES CENTER  
UC DAVIS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS

**2018**  
**SAMPLE COSTS FOR BEEF CATTLE**



**COW – CALF PRODUCTION**  
**CENTRAL COAST**  
300 Head Operation  
**Amended April – 2019**

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All costs in this presentation are estimates based on conversations with many ranchers and do not represent any one ranching operation.



Annual Lease ~ \$98,000 at \$23.00 / AUM

- Includes 300 cows, 60 replacement heifers and 15 bulls

**Table A. Operations Calendar.** The Operations Calendar is for a beef breeding herd which shows approximate dates for the operations. Operations will vary according to seasonal weather.

Date		Operation
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1-Dec	31-Jan	Branding & vaccinating all calves, castrating bull calves
1-May	1-July	Preg check, vaccinate, and deworm heifers & cows
1-May	1-July	Bangs vaccinate heifers (when you preg check)
1-May	31-July	Sell open heifers, cows, and cull bulls
1-May	1-July	Ship/sell calves (some operations give booster vaccinations and deworm calves 2-10 weeks before shipping)
1-Aug	1-Nov	Pre-breeding vaccinations – cows & heifers (although some operations vaccinate cows & heifers only once at preg check)
1-Aug	1-Nov	Bulls: breeding soundness check, **Trich test, vaccinate, and deworm; sell any additional cull bulls after breeding soundness check (bulls may be vaccinated and dewormed a second time if they are brought in for something else)
15-Aug	1-Nov	Calving
1-Sept	1-Nov	Bulls purchased

\*\*Tritrichomonas foetus: "Trich" is a venereal disease of cattle.



- 1 bull for 20 cows
- Bulls stay in with cows for 3 months
- 15 bulls - bulls replaced in 3-6 years
- 5 bulls each year for ~\$6,000/ea.

Photo credit: Allan Renz

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- Branding is December through January
- Before branding cattle need to be gathered



Horses are used to gather cattle



Photo credit: Swanton Pacific Ranch

ATVs are often used to gather cattle as well



Photo credit: Larry Ford

# Fence lines helpful to gather cattle



Photo credit: Allan Renz

- Cattle are brought to the corrals
- Calves separated from cows



# Ranchers rope calves from horseback

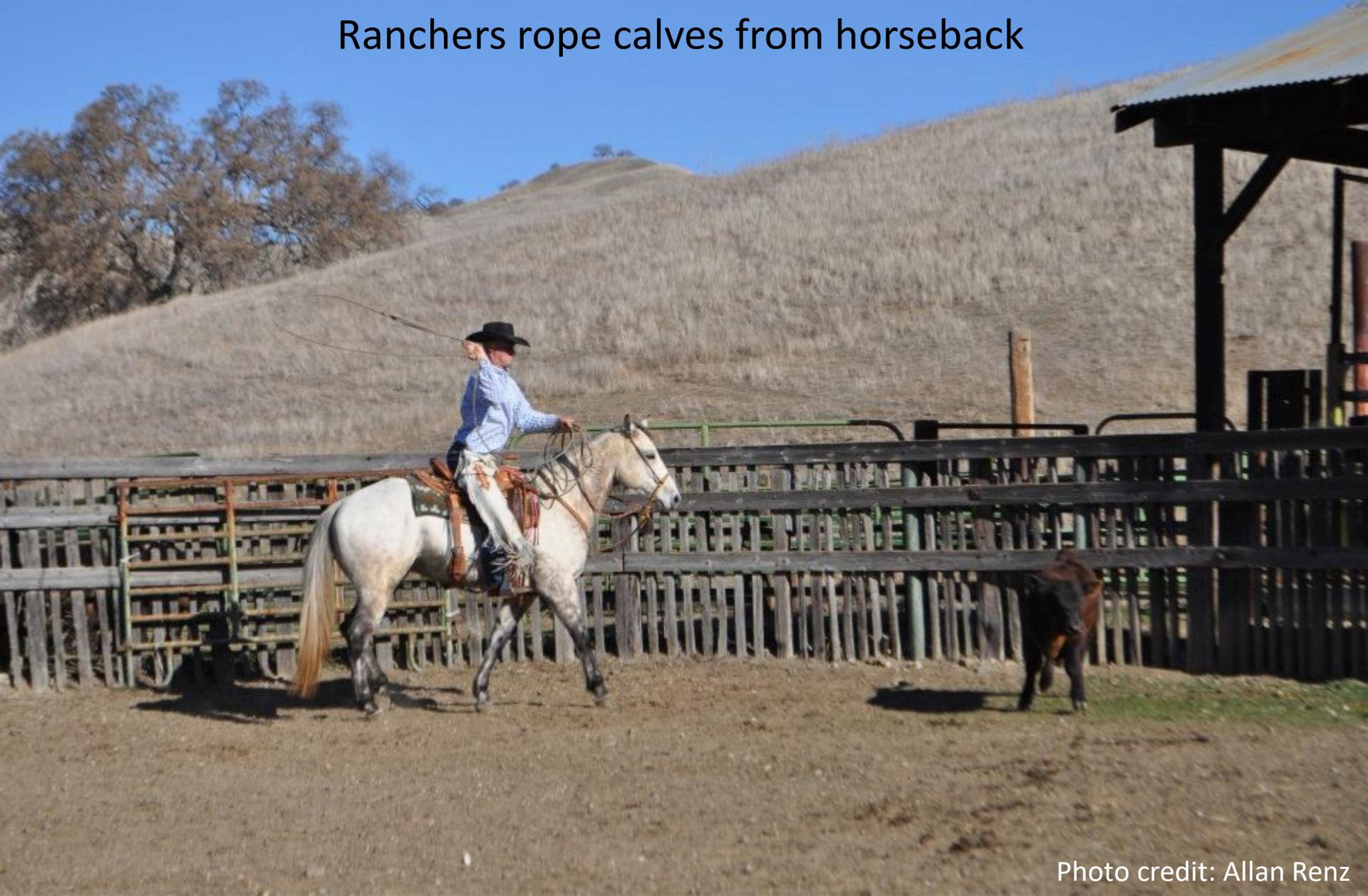


Photo credit: Allan Renz



Photo credit: Larry Ford

- One person ropes front two feet.
- Second person gets back feet.
- Third person uses a traditional branding iron heated with coals.



# Castrate & vaccinate calves at branding



Photo credit: Larry Ford

Sometimes people use electric branding irons.



Photo credit: Swanton Pacific Ranch

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## Veterinary Services ~ \$3,000

- Preg check cows & BANGS vaccinate heifers against Brucellosis - June
- Bull breeding soundness & tich test – Sept/Oct



Photo credit: Swanton Pacific Ranch

Vaccinations / deworming for all animals ~\$11,700

- Calves – at branding
- Cows – at preg check
- Bulls - breeding soundness/trich testing
- 1x, some operations will do 2x/yr



Photo credit: Rebecca Ozeran

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- Ship calves in June
- Freight / Trucking ~ \$5,400



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Calving: Sept., Oct., Nov.



Photo credit: Swanton Pacific Ranch

## Alfalfa Hay ~ \$9,000

- Many ranchers don't buy hay at all, except during drought
- Others feed hay during calving (pre- & post- partum) & mostly heifers
- 1 load of hay is 25 tons: Most years 1 load, drought years 2 loads
- \$180 - \$220/ton – delivered = \$0.11 per pound
- 2% of body weight (1,000 - 1,200 lbs) ~20-24 lbs/hd/day
- ~\$2.20 / hd/ day





Photo credit: Allan Renz

- Supplements (mineral, salt, protein) ~ \$8,000
- Mineral (copper, selenium, zinc, etc.): Year-round
- Protein: May through October when grass is dry



Photo credit: Larry Ford

Fencing Material ~ \$5,000



Photo credit: Larry Ford



Photo credit: Allan Renz



Photo credit: Swanton Pacific Ranch

Pickup Truck ~ \$13,400 in mileage



Photo credit: Allan Renz

Stock Trailer ~ \$2,000 in mileage



Photo credit: Larry Ford

ATV ~ \$3,700 in mileage



Photo credit: Allan Renz

Day Labor ~ \$9,000 (~\$30/hd)



Photo credit: Larry Ford

Liability Insurance ~ \$2,700

Labor / Employee Insurance ~ \$5,000



Photo credit: Allan Renz

Office Expenses ~ \$2,700



Photo credit: Allan Renz

OPERATING INPUTS	Units		Amounts/Unit		Cost/Unit	Total Costs	‡Cost/Cow
Alfalfa Hay	50	tons	1	year	\$180.00	\$9,000	\$30.00
Supplements-(Combined)	20	tons	1	year	\$405.00	\$8,100	\$27.00
Range-(Cows@ 1.2/AUM)	267	cows	3	months	\$23.00	\$18,423	\$61.41
Range-(Cows@ 1.2/AUM)	300	cows	9	months	\$23.00	\$62,100	\$207.00
Range-(Yearling Heifers@ 0.7/AUM)	60	heifers	6	months	\$16.10	\$5,796	\$19.32
Range-(Bred Heifers@ 0.7/AUM)	33	heifers	4	months	\$16.10	\$2,125	\$7.08
Range-(Bred Heifers@ 0.7/AUM)	60	heifers	6	months	\$16.10	\$5,796	\$19.32
Range-(Bulls@ 1.3/AUM)	10	bulls	4	month	\$23.00	\$920	\$3.07
Range-(Bulls@ 1.3/AUM)	15	bulls	8	month	\$23.00	\$2,760	\$9.20
Veterinary Service-cows	300	cows	1	each	\$5.00	\$1,500	\$5.00
Veterinary Service -heifers	60	heifers	1	each	\$3.00	\$180	\$3.00
Veterinary Service-bulls	15	bulls	1	each	\$93.00	\$1,395	\$4.65
Vaccine/Wormer/Etc.-cows	300	cows	1	each	\$25.00	\$7,500	\$25.00
Vaccine/Wormer/Etc.-heifers	60	heifers	1	each	\$8.00	\$480	\$8.00
Vaccine/Wormer/Etc.-calves	219	calves	1	each	\$16.00	\$3,504	\$16.00
Vaccine/Wormer/Etc.-bulls	15	bulls	1	each	\$17.00	\$255	\$0.85
Brand Inspection	281	head	1	inspection	\$1.50	\$422	\$1.50
Marketing Order Promo (checkoff)	281	head	1	checkoff	\$1.00	\$281	\$1.00
Freight/trucking	300	head	1	each	\$18.00	\$5,400	\$18.00
Bulls Purchased	5	bulls	1	each	\$6,000.00	\$30,000	\$100.00
Pickup Truck 1-Ton 4WD-5th Wheel	1	pickup	25,000	miles	\$0.54	\$13,375	\$44.58
Stock Trailer-5th Wheel	1	trailer	10,000	miles	\$0.20	\$2,000	\$6.67
ATV's	3	ATV	3,500	miles	\$0.35	\$3,675	\$12.25
Fencing Materials-Maint/Repair		n/a		\$/year	\$5,000.00	\$5,000	\$16.67
Equipment (maintenance and repair)		n/a		\$/year	\$2,000.00	\$2,000	\$6.67
Ranch Labor	1	cowboy	300	cow	\$30.00	\$9,000	\$30.00
<b>OPERATING COSTS</b>						<b>\$200,987</b>	<b>\$683.23</b>
Interest on Operating Capital @ 6.5%	(Table 2)					\$3,060	\$10.20
<b>TOTAL OPERATING COSTS</b>						<b>\$204,047</b>	<b>\$693.43</b>
<b>CASH OVERHEAD COSTS</b>							
Liability Insurance						\$2,680	\$8.93
Labor/Employee Insurance	7,500					\$5,025	\$16.75
Office Expenses						\$2,680	\$8.93
<b>TOTAL CASH OVERHEAD</b>						<b>\$10,385</b>	<b>\$34.62</b>
<b>TOTAL CASH COSTS</b>						<b>\$214,432</b>	<b>\$714.77</b>

**Table 1. COSTS AND RETURNS FOR BEEF COW – CALF PRODUCTION**  
 Cow-Calf Operation (300 head) Central Coast 2019

<b>PRODUCTION/REVENUE</b>	<b>Head</b>	<b>Units/Head</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Price/Unit</b>	<b>Total Value</b>	<b>†Value/Head</b>	<b>Your Costs</b>
Steer Calves	140	6.50	cwt	\$152.00	\$138,320	\$988.00	
Heifer Calves	79	5.50	cwt	\$137.00	\$59,527	\$753.50	
Yearling Heifers	27	8.00	cwt	\$115.00	\$24,840	\$920.00	
Cull Cows	30	12.00	cwt	\$69.00	\$24,840	\$828.00	
Cull Bulls	5	18.00	cwt	\$80.00	\$7,200	\$1,440.00	
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>281</b>				<b>\$254,727</b>		

OPERATING INPUTS	Units		Amounts/Unit		Cost/Unit	Total Costs	±Cost/Cow
Alfalfa Hay	50	tons	1	year	\$180.00	\$9,000	\$30.00
Supplements-(Combined)	20	tons	1	year	\$405.00	\$8,100	\$27.00
Range-(Cows@ 1.2/AUM)	267	cows	3	months	\$23.00	\$18,423	\$61.41
Range-(Cows@ 1.2/AUM)	300	cows	9	months	\$23.00	\$62,100	\$207.00
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Brand Inspection	281	head	1	inspection	\$1.50	\$422	\$1.50
Marketing Order Promo (checkoff)	281	head	1	checkoff	\$1.00	\$281	\$1.00
Freight/trucking	300	head	1	each	\$18.00	\$5,400	\$18.00
Bulls Purchased	5	bulls	1	each	\$6,000.00	\$30,000	\$100.00
Pickup Truck 1-Ton 4WD-5th Wheel	1	pickup	25,000	miles	\$0.54	\$13,375	\$44.58
Stock Trailer-5th Wheel	1	trailer	10,000	miles	\$0.20	\$2,000	\$6.67
ATVs	3	ATV	3,500	miles	\$0.35	\$3,675	\$12.25
Fencing Materials-Maint/Repair		n/a		\$/year	\$5,000.00	\$5,000	\$16.67
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<b>TOTAL CASH COSTS</b>						<b>\$214,432</b>	<b>\$714.77</b>
<b>REVENUE ABOVE CASH COSTS</b>						<b>\$40,295</b>	<b>\$134.32</b>

# Revenue above cash costs is \$40,295

This does not account for the following:

- Salary for the rancher
- Capitol recovery costs (equipment, investment, overhead, and depreciation costs)

When accounting for capitol recovery cost, revenue above total costs is

**-\$7,417.**



## Market fluctuations are important as well.

PRODUCTION/REVENUE	Head	Units/Head	Unit	Price/Unit 2019	Total Value 2019	Price/Unit 2018	Total Value 2018
Steer Calves	140	6.5	cwt	\$152.00	\$138,320	134.31	\$122,222
Heifer Calves	79	5.5	cwt	\$137.00	\$59,527	126.41	\$54,925
Yearling Heifers	27	8	cwt	\$115.00	\$24,840	115.44	\$24,935
Cull Cows	30	12	cwt	\$69.00	\$24,840	69.36	\$24,970
Cull Bulls	5	18	cwt	\$80.00	\$7,200	80.16	\$7,214
Total Revenue					\$254,727		\$234,266

Using 2018 instead of 2019 prices for cattle sold, total revenue would have been \$20,460 less.

REVENUE ABOVE CASH COSTS	
2019	2018
\$40,295	\$19,834

**UC| COOPERATIVE EXTENSION-AGRICULTURAL ISSUES CENTER**  
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<b>REVENUE ABOVE CASH COSTS</b>					<b>\$40,295</b>	<b>\$134.32</b>	
ANNUAL CAPITAL RECOVERY	(Table 4)				\$47,712	\$159.04	
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>					<b>\$262,145</b>	<b>\$873.81</b>	
<b>REVENUE ABOVE TOTAL COSTS</b>					<b>-\$7,417</b>	<b>-\$24.72</b>	

\*\* Capital Recovery costs are allocated between different production operations on the ranch and charged at 67% of the total.

†Value/Head is based on animals sold. ‡Cost/Cow column is based on 300 cows.

# How can a rancher afford to make \$20,000 - \$40,000/yr. in the Bay Area or Central Coast?

- Other profitable ag operations
- Off-ranch job
- Many say they do it because they love the life style.



Grazing on public lands has additional costs beyond what we've talked about.

Add your other costs to our cost study table.



If we want happy rangelands, happy agencies, & happy cows....



Photo credit: A. Fateman

- We need to look at the finances.
  - Ranchers can look for ways to improve operational efficiencies.
  - Agencies can look for ways to make grazing more affordable.



Photo credit: Larry Ford

Thank You



Photo credit: Allan Renz