

SOFTWARE OPTIONS AND WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Computers have become an inexpensive tool that can do a lot of things to summarize the reams of information we have to deal with everyday in agribusiness. This article is geared towards those producers who are using a computer (or thinking about getting one) and want to take the next step to use it to help manage their farm business. It is important to remember that any computer can only provide back information that is as good as the raw data that goes into it.

I have tried to sort the following programs and links into specific areas of functionality, and have arranged them alphabetically. I apologize ahead of time if I have missed any programs that you feel should be present on the list, and look forward to receiving information on them. Many of the programs listed provide free demo versions for you to try out prior to making a purchase decision. These are great and are recommended to ensure good purchase decisions are made. Think of it as test-driving a truck before you buy.

As well, I have provided a very brief list of some websites that you may or may not find useful. The internet is a huge interconnected storage area for information of all types (both accurate and otherwise) and it is impossible to cover all the areas of use and/or interest to producers. Hopefully the sites provided can give a jumping off point for those who are looking for good information with which to make management decisions.

1. Cow Herd Record Keeping Programs

These are programs that are designed to collect, interpret and report performance information on cow herds and calf crops.

Cow Chips

[http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowchip\\$info.html](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowchip$info.html)

Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS)

www.chaps2000.com

Cow Sense

www.tradexagriscystems.com

Herd-Link

www.biobeef.com

Red Wing Software

<http://www.redwingsoftware.com/index.shtml>

Viewtrak

www.viewtrak.com

2. Accounting Solutions

Settler

Settler software specialises in agricultural accounting packages

www.settler.com

More generic accounting programs include:

Simply Accounting

www.simplyaccounting.com

Quicken / Quick Books

www.quicken.ca

As well, the **MARS** (Managing Agricultural Records for Success) program also has a good website.

<http://farmbooks.com/>

3. Enterprise Analyses

This area falls in line with accounting and it combines both production and financial measures to produce a complete enterprise analysis.

Cow Profits

This program is offered by Alberta Agriculture and allows producers to undergo enterprise analysis. As well, the program has been used to evaluate cowherds and provide benchmarking data that can be found on the Alberta Agriculture website.

[http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowprofit\\$.html](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowprofit$.html)

National Cattlemen's Beef Association Integrated Resource Management

The NCBA has initiated a program called Integrated Resource Management that is designed to be a systems approach to quality beef production. As well, the US has developed a Standardised Performance Analysis (SPA) program that is used by various agencies and producers to provide benchmark data and for enterprise analysis.

www.beef.org (select Beef Production / IRM from the top menu.)

There are other organizations providing enterprise analysis assistance across the country, for example, the Western Beef Development Centre (www.wbdc.sk.ca) in Saskatchewan. It is worthwhile to contact your local extension agent for information on these programs.

4. Ration Formulation

This area gets into some more complex applications, and if unfamiliar with ration balancing, it is a good idea to work with your local ag. rep or feed supplier to arrive at a balanced ration for your livestock. Programs available range from free to several thousand dollars.

Cow Bytes

This is a good program put out by Alberta Agriculture for ration formulation.

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytes.html>

Cowculator

This is a free spreadsheet put out by Oklahoma State University.

<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/exten/cowculator/>

NRC Nutrient Requirements of Beef Cattle: Seventh Revised Edition: Update 2000

This is the base from which most nutrition programs work. It is a good read if nothing else, and a book worth owning.

<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069343/html/>

5. Modelling Programs

Modelling programs are programs that look at "what ifs". They assess a wide range of management possibilities and project future results. We can then alter management factors and begin to assess potential future results of current management decisions. These tools tend to be extremely complex and often require a skilled operator. While it is impossible to predict the future, these are powerful management tools as they can assess many more possibilities at once than the typical manager and thus can summarise potential results.

Decision Evaluator for the Cattle Industry (DECI)

This is a program developed by USDA MARC (Meat Animal Research Centre) in combination with several contributors. It looks at breeding and crossbreeding decisions, marketing decisions, feeding decisions, pasture conditions, and a variety of other factors too numerous to mention. It requires a lot of skill to produce accurate reflections of management systems, however it is also an extremely powerful tool.

<http://borg.marc.usda.gov/decii/decii.html>

6. Provincial and Federal Agriculture sites

Good sources of local and national information on agriculture.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada <http://www.agr.gc.ca/>

British Columbia <http://www.gov.bc.ca/agf/>

Alberta <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/>

Saskatchewan <http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/>

Manitoba <http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture>

Ontario <http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/>
Quebec <http://www.agr.gouv.qc.ca/>
New Brunswick <http://www.gnb.ca/AFA-APA/Index.htm>
Nova Scotia <http://gov.ns.ca/nsaf/home.htm>
Prince Edward Island <http://www.gov.pe.ca/af/agweb/index.php3>
United States Department of Agriculture <http://www.usda.gov/>

7. National Beef Sites

Canadian Cattlemen's Association

www.cattle.ca

Beef Information Centre

www.beefinfo.org

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (United States)

www.beef.org

8. Farmsoftware.com

This site contains links to a variety of livestock, environmental, accounting and other types of agricultural management software. They contain many links to free software and also to programs offered.

www.farmsoftware.com

The last page of the internet...

As stated before, there are many other websites and programs out there that are extremely useful. This article is not intended to endorse any specific product, but to provide a jumping off point in your search for tools that can help you use your computer to add value to your agricultural enterprise.

Last, but certainly not least:

The Canadian Hereford Association

www.hereford.ca

Here you can find breeders, search for seedstock and catch up on the latest Hereford happenings.

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