



# Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey Findings: Production Benchmarks

Patrick Ramsey,  
Business Development – Beef Competitiveness  
Livestock & Farm Business Branch, AAF

Thank you to Kathy Larson, Beef Economist, Western Beef  
Development Centre for sharing her slides

# Overview

- The Profit-Production Link
- Why Production Benchmarks are Useful
- WCCCS Background
- Survey Says....(WCCCS Results)

# The Profit-Production Link

Unit Cost of Production or Break-Even Price =

$$\frac{\text{TOTAL COW HERD COSTS}}{\text{TOTAL LBS OF CALF WEANED}}$$

↑ CONCEPTION RATE

↑ CALVING RATE

↑ WEAN RATE

↑ % CALVED IN FIRST 21 D

↓ OPEN RATE

↓ CALF DEATH LOSS

↓ CALVING SPAN

# The Profit-Production Link

**Scenario:** 3 Ranchers all have same \$/cow COP and same avg weaning weight.

- \$700/cow COP
- 550 lb weaning weight

What price do they need to sell their calves for to break-even?

# The Profit-Production Link

**Scenario:** 3 Ranchers all have same \$/cow COP and same avg weaning weight.

- \$700/cow COP
- 550 lb weaning weight

**QUICK ANSWER:**

$$\text{\$700/550 lb} = \text{\$1.27/lb}$$

# The Profit-Production Link

**Scenario:** 3 Ranchers all have same \$/cow COP and same avg weaning weight.

- \$700/cow COP
- 550 lb weaning weight

**GUESS WHAT? NOT EVERY COW WEANS A CALF. ANSWER WILL DEPEND ON WEAN PERCENTAGE.**

# The Profit-Production Link

**Scenario:** 3 Ranchers all have same \$/cow COP and same avg weaning weight.

- \$700/cow COP
- 550 lb weaning weight
- **Wean % = # calves weaned/# females exposed**
- influences UCOP (break-even price on calves)

100%	90%	80%	70%
\$1.27	\$1.41	\$1.59	\$1.82

$\$700/550 \text{ lb} = \$1.27/\text{lb}$       $\$700/0.90/550 = \$1.41$

# Why Production Benchmarks are Useful

@kathywbdc

#wbdc2015



# Production Benchmarks

- Year-over-year comparison of own herd important
- Helpful to have numbers to compare to:
  - Am I on the right track?
  - Do I excel in a certain area?
  - Could I improve in a certain area?
  - What are others doing?
- This is achieved through benchmarks

# WCCCS

*Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey*

@kathywbdc

#wbdc2015

# WCCCS Background

- Part of ADF-funded Young Rancher Study
- AB conducted cow-calf surveys in 80s & late 90s to generate provincial benchmarks
- Last one in 1998 involved over 1700 producers
- Collaboration between BC, AB, SK & MB to revive & expand the AB survey to establish Western Canadian production benchmarks

# WCCS 2014

- 58 Q's → 30-45 minutes to complete
- Q's kept similar to 1998 survey to allow for historical comparison
- Hard copy & online versions
- Survey ran from November 2014 to end of February 2015
- Survey respondents could request complimentary report with their indicators

# WCCCS Background

- Offer historical comparison with previous study findings → how has industry changed
- Guide extension and research efforts
- Validate anecdotal evidence on production matters
- Identify which management practices are linked to strong production performance
- Generate an updated set of production benchmarks for the cow-calf industry

# WCCCS

Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey



DEVELOPMENT CENTRE



*Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey*

## **Survey Says...**

@kathywbdc

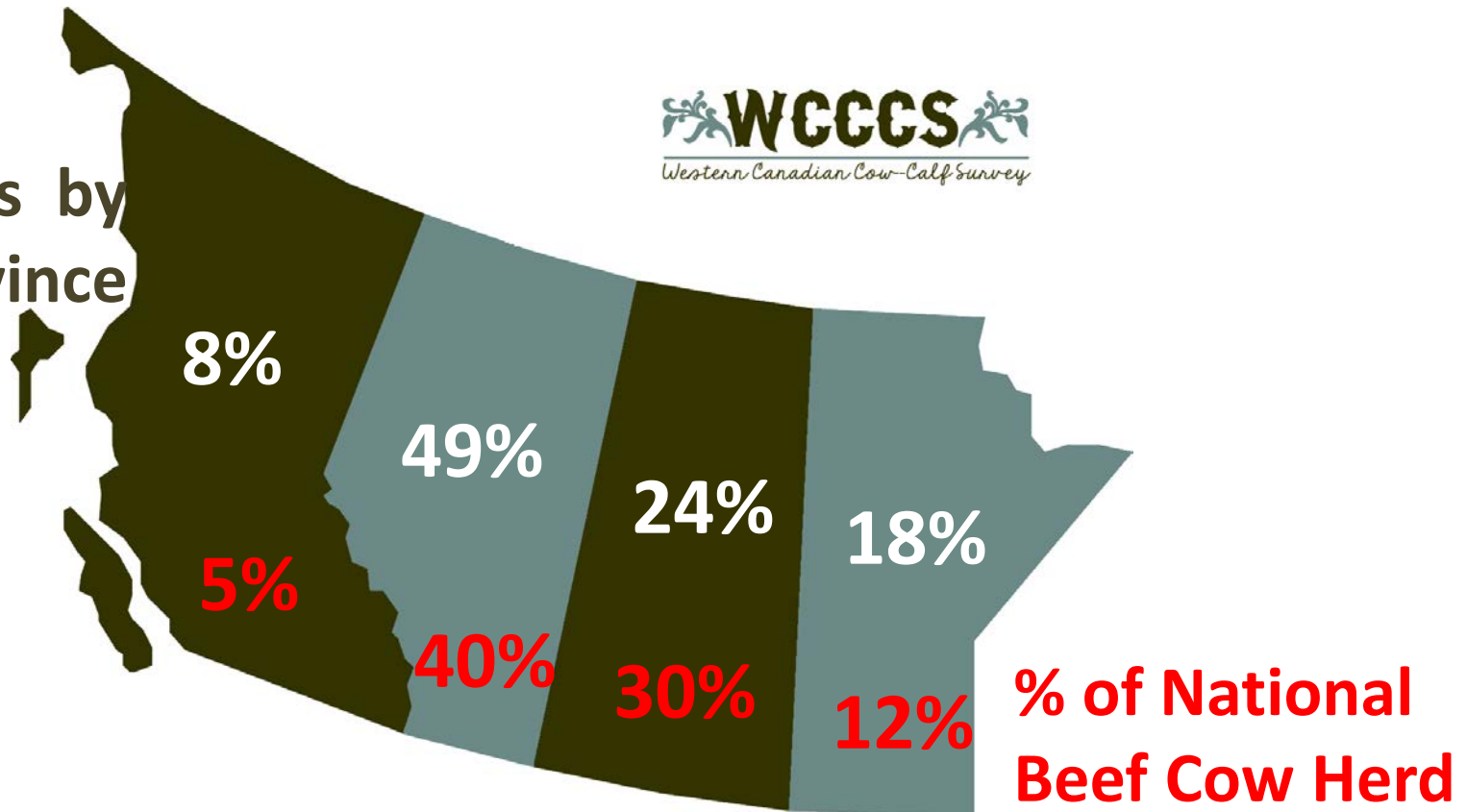
#wbdc2015

# WCCCS Survey Findings

- 411 responses received
- Avg age of respondents: 50
- Avg years raising cattle: 28



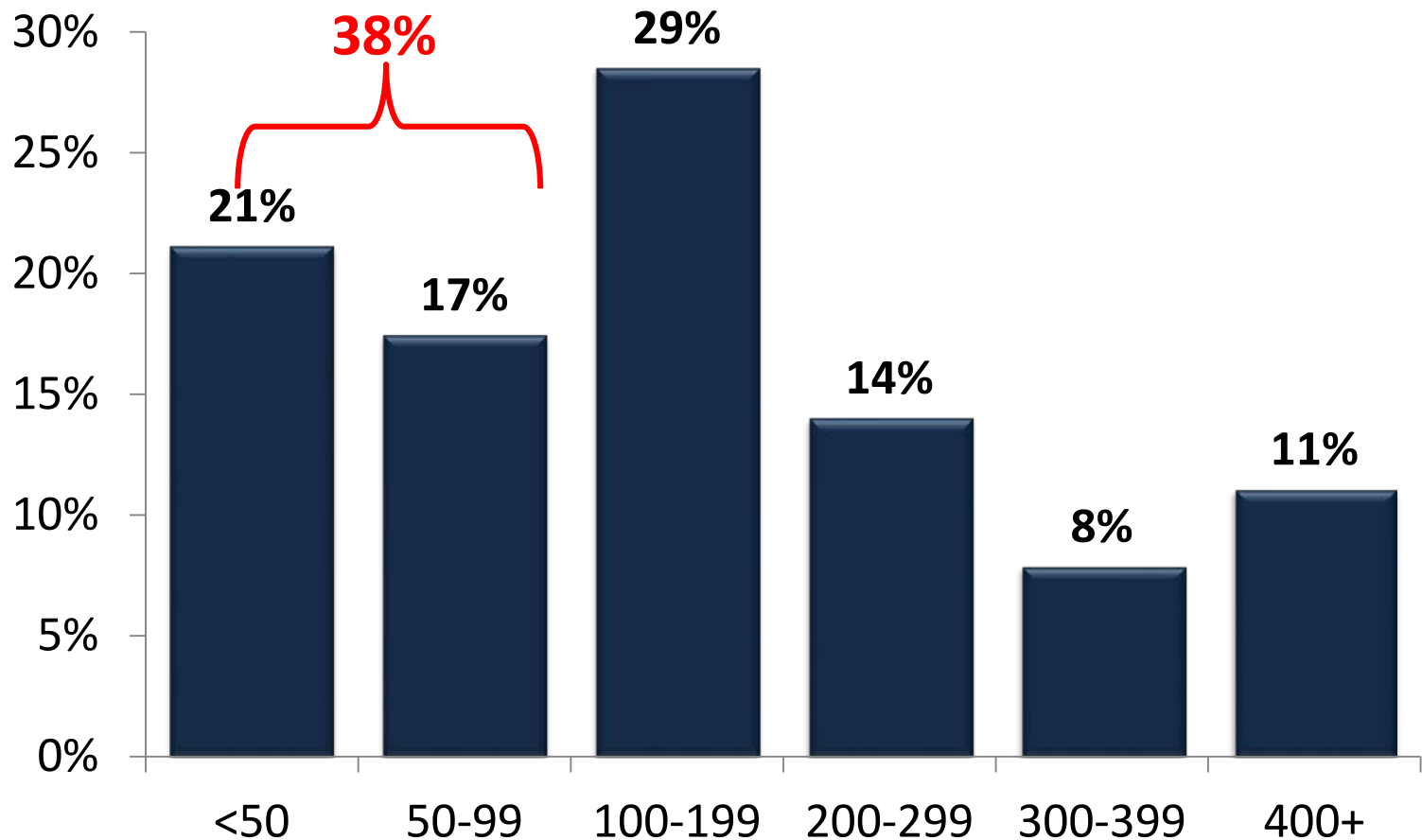
Responses by Province





# WCCCS Survey Findings

- Avg herd size: ~170 Females Calved in 2014



# Reproduction Indicators

- Avg cow:bull ratio 24:1
- Avg breeding season length 92 d
- % with 63 d or less 24%
- % Breeding heifers earlier 26%
- Avg # Days earlier ~2 wks
- Avg Conception Rate 93%
  - Cows 7% Open & Heifers 10% Open

# 2013 Breeding Management

- 60% pregnancy checked cows (**UP** from 49% in '98)
- 66% pregnancy checked heifers
- 64% semen tested bulls (**UP** from 51% in '98)
- 18% utilized Artificial Insemination
- 11% utilized Estrus Synchronization

# Bull Selection Criteria

**#1**  
Breed

**#2**  
Conformation

**#7** Polled

**#8** Price

**#9** Genetic Tests

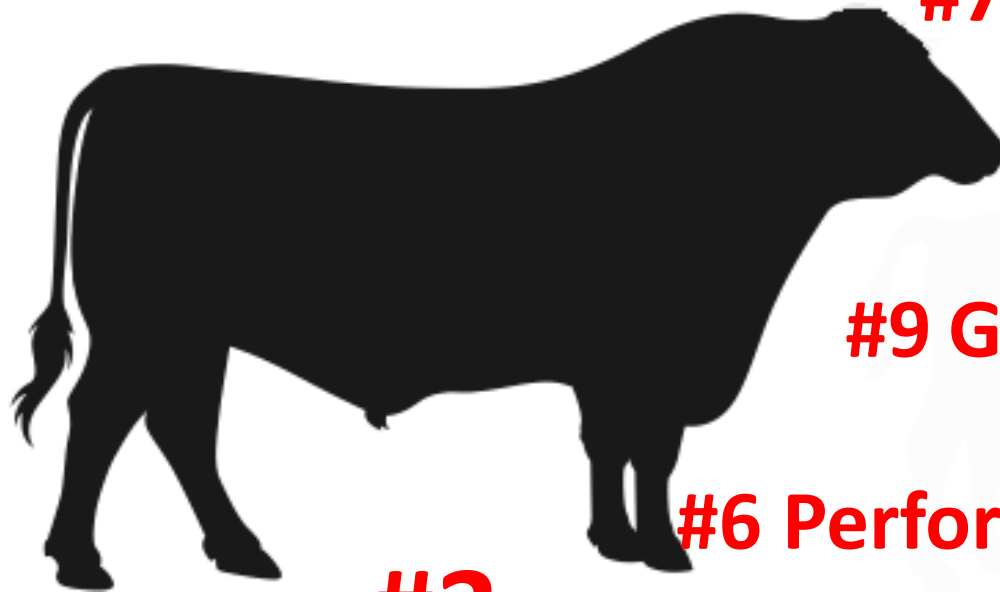
**#6** Performance Tests

**#3**

Birth Weight

**#4** EPDs

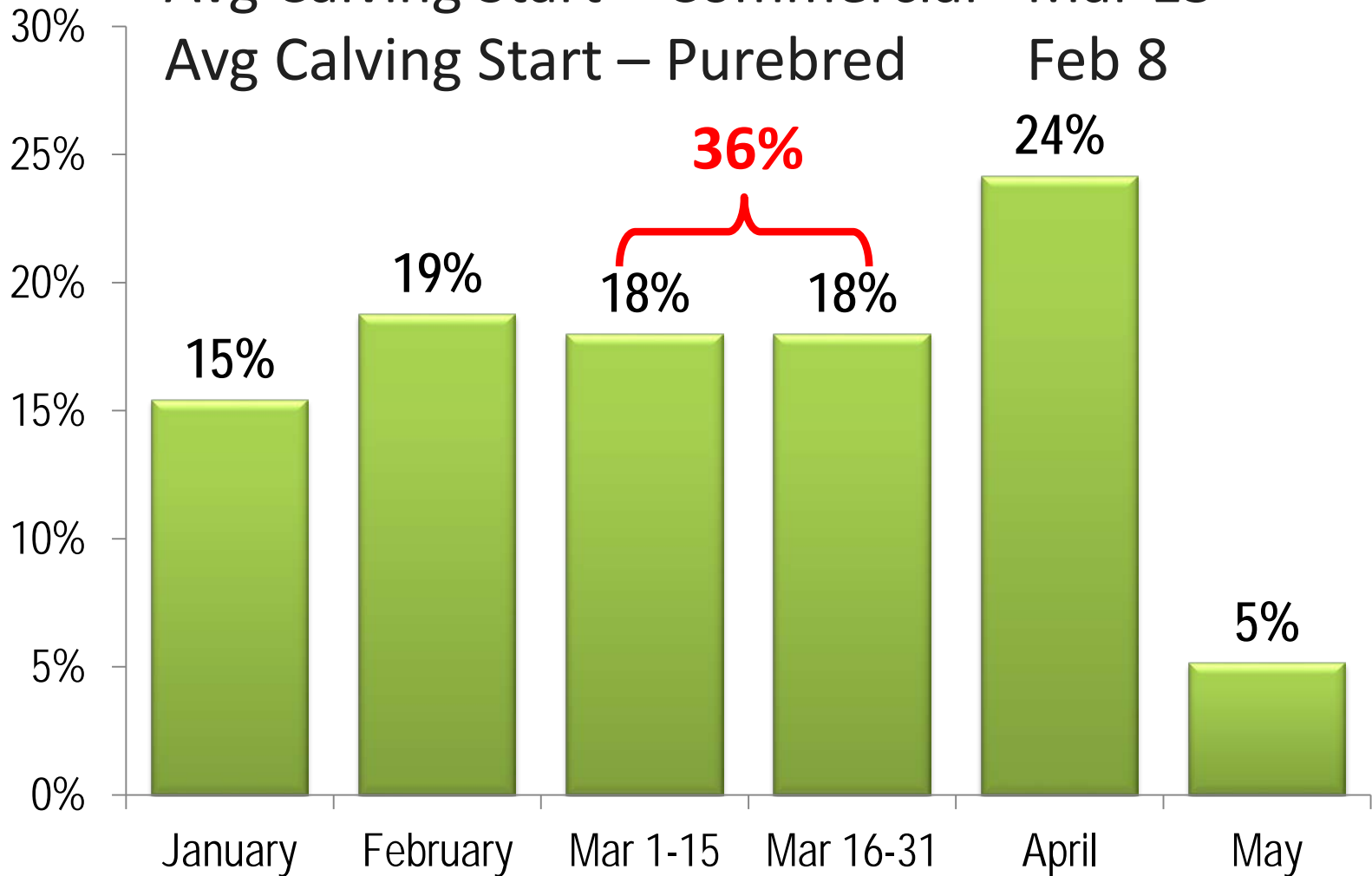
**#5** Pedigree



# Calving Start

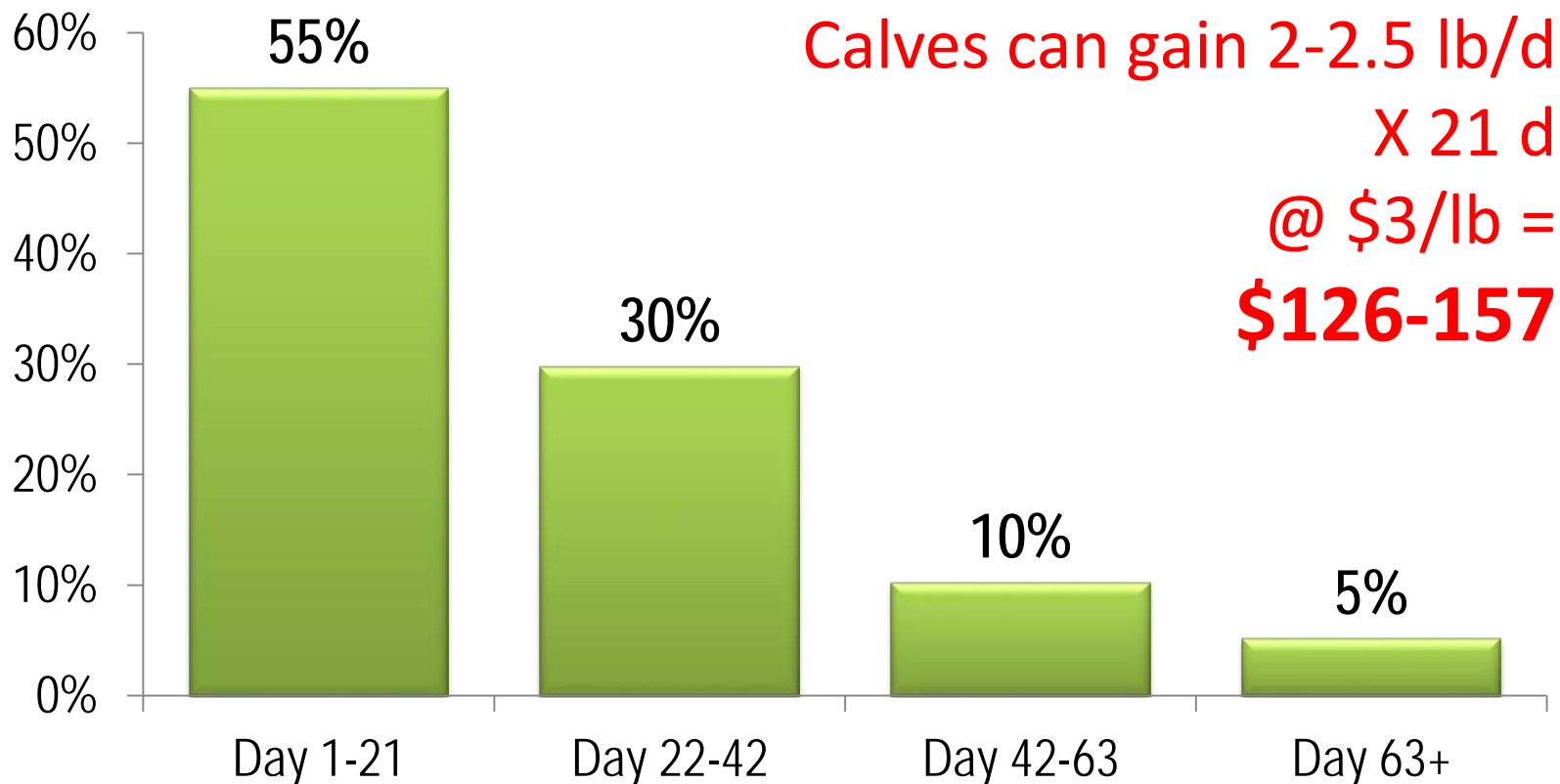
Avg Calving Start – Commercial Mar 15

Avg Calving Start – Purebred Feb 8



# Calving Distribution

- Ideally, 60%+ calving in first 21 d
- 42% met this target
- Improvement from '98 → 48% in first 21 d



# 2014 Calf Crop

- 7% Average Calf Death Loss vs 4.4% in '98
- 24% Implanted Calves
  - Of those who implanted, 19% implanted 2X
- 19% Provided Creep Feed
- 85% Average Wean Percentage
- 534 lb Weaned per Cow Exposed vs 506 lbs in '98

# 2014 Calves

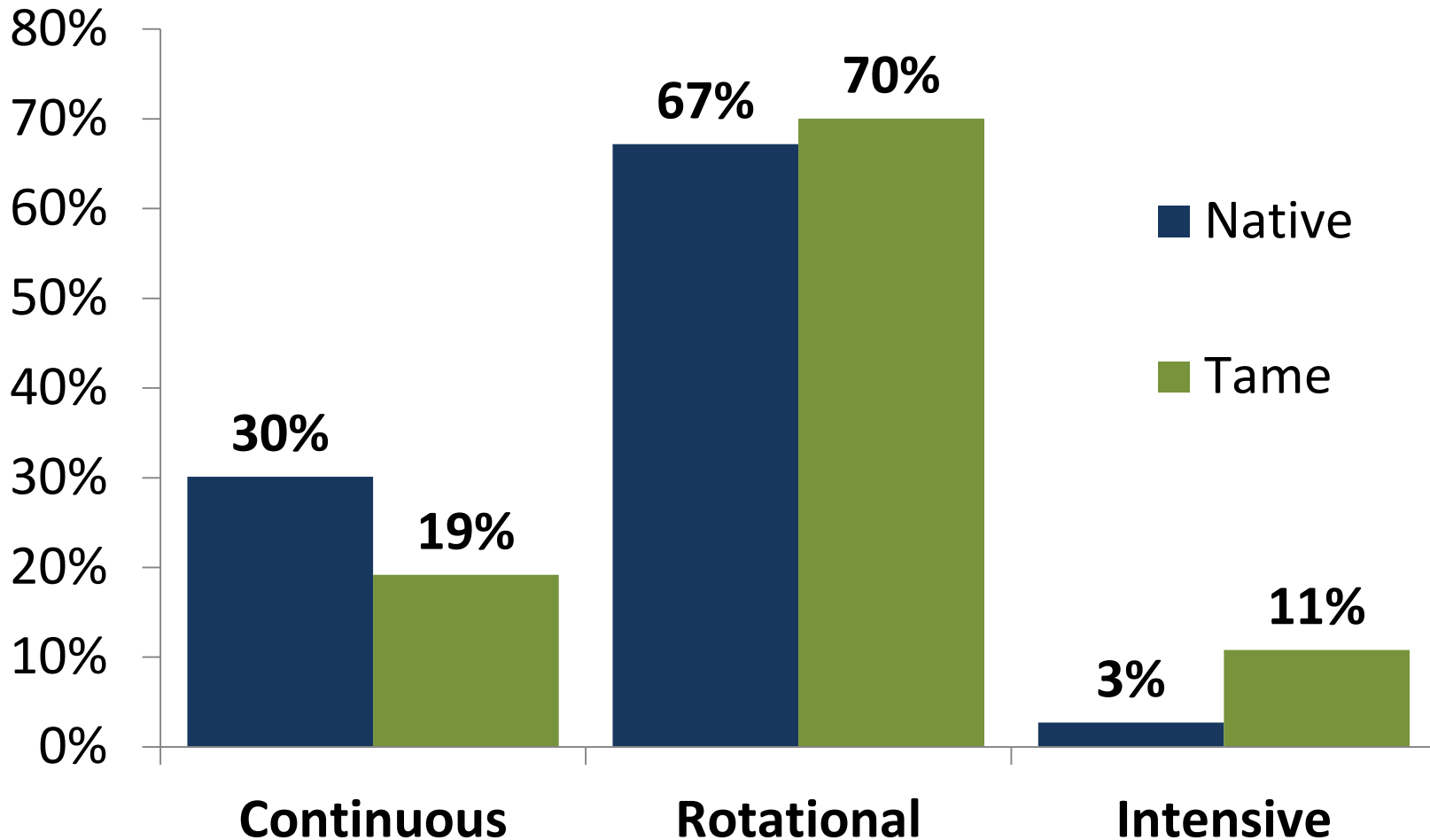
- 72% sold nearly 50% of calves at weaning
- 9% preconditioned 30-60d
- 35% retained calves to background
- 9% retain to feedlot finish
- 80% who sold calves at weaning, sold them via live auction



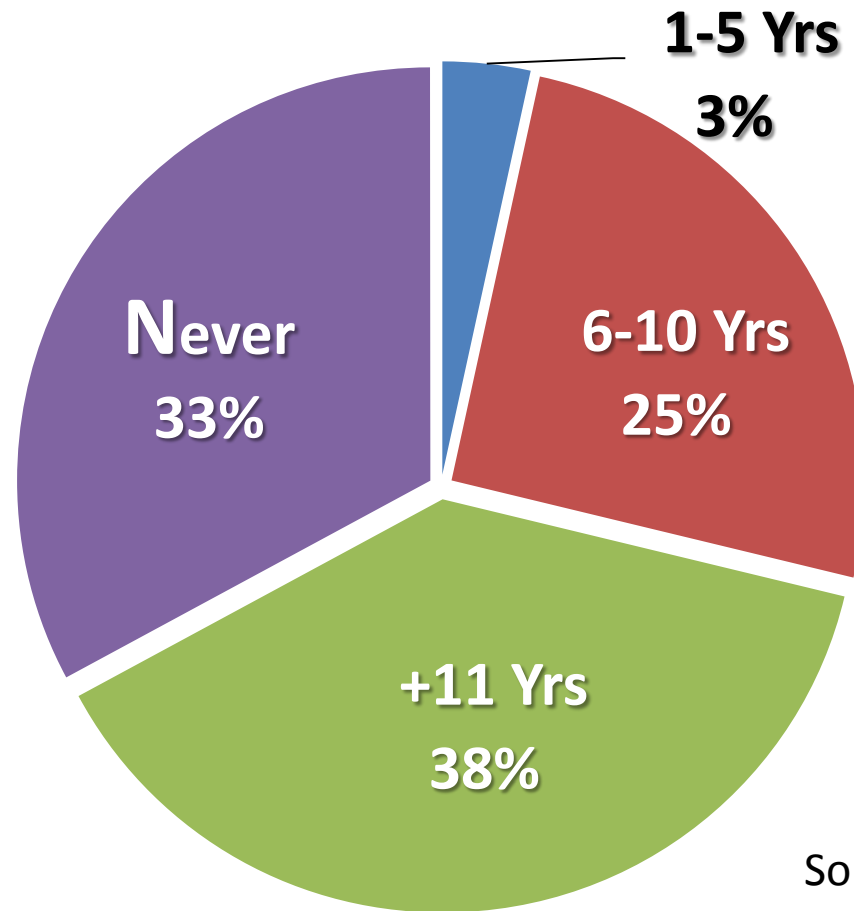
# Production Practices

- 95% supplied trace mineral in summer; 98% in winter (**UP** from 84% & 90% in '98)
- 19% Body Condition Score (**DOWN** from 23% in '98)
- Avg cow wt: ~1375 lb → 22% actual scale wt
- 91% vaccinate (**UP** from 90% in '98)
- 74% restrain cattle to treat on pasture
- 8% inject in rump & hind ¼ (**DOWN** from 29% in '98)

# Grazing Management



# Pasture Rejuve – How Often?

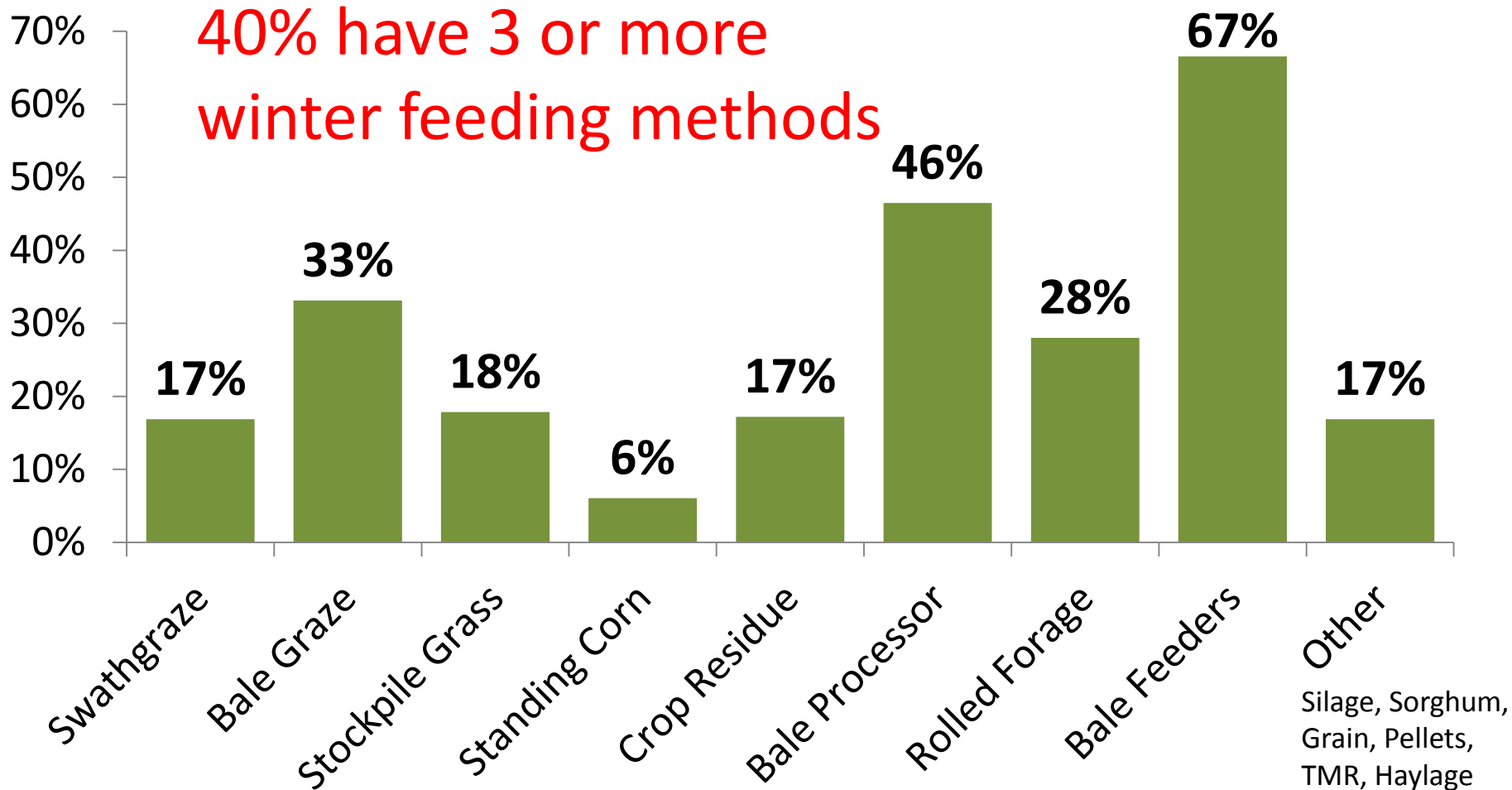


Source: WCCCS 2014

# Winter Feeding

- 47% feed test for quality
- Of those, 80% use results for ration balancing
- 56% sort cows for winter feeding
  - 83% by Age, 66% by Condition & 26% by Stage

# Winter Feeding Methods



# Consider Feed waste:

- Placing forage into different types of feeders results in 3 to 15% loss (Buskirk 2002)
- Unrolling long hay on snow - 13% waste
- Bale processor chopping meadow brome hay onto snow – 19% waste
- Chopped pit silage fed on snow – 26% waste
- Long round bale silage fed on snow – 23% (Yaremcio 2009)

# Recommended management practices

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- 📄 Follow a vaccination program recommended by your herd veterinarian
- 📄 Bull evaluation
- 📄 Pregnancy check
- 📄 Practice low stress weaning
- 📄 Feed test and balance rations
- 📄 Condition Score
- 📄 Feed thin cows separately

# GOLD Indicators

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	AB '98	WCCCS 2014
Growth (weaning weight lbs)	577	559
Open cows (%)	4.4	7
Length of calving season (days)	93	92
Death loss of calves (%)	4.4	7.2





*Western Canadian Cow-Calf Survey*

Full results will be posted at:  
[www.wbdc.sk.ca/wcccs.htm](http://www.wbdc.sk.ca/wcccs.htm)



# Any Questions?

[pat.ramsey@gov.ab.ca](mailto:pat.ramsey@gov.ab.ca)

[barry.yaremccio@gov.ab.ca](mailto:barry.yaremccio@gov.ab.ca)

[freeman.iwasiuk@gov.ab.ca](mailto:freeman.iwasiuk@gov.ab.ca)

Ag-Info Centre: 310-FARM