



# Ranching 101: Glossary of Terms

Prepared by the Alameda County Conservation Partnership and the  
UC Cooperative Extension for the Ranching 101 Workshop

November 7, 2017

## A

- **anaplasmosis** - An infectious disease of cattle that causes destruction of red blood cells. The disease is caused by a minute parasite, *Anaplasma marginale*, found in the red blood cells of infected cattle. It can be transmitted from infected animals to healthy animals by insects or by surgical instruments. The disease can be divided into four stages: incubation, developmental, convalescent, and carrier (Gill 1994) .
  - **Angus** – The most common breed of beef cattle in the United States, most often characterized by their solid black hide (Black Angus), but can also be brownish red (Red Angus) (Cattle Today).
- 
- **animal unit (AU)** - A generalized unit for describing stocking density, stocking rate and carry capacity. Usually accepted to be a 1,000-lb cow with calf or 1.4 yearling cattle.
  - **animal unit month (AUM)** - Amount of feed or forage required to maintain one animal unit (e.g., a 1,000-lb cow and calf) for one month
  - **auction** - Market for cattle through which an auctioneer sells cattle to the highest bidder.
  - **A.I.** – artificial insemination
  - **average daily gain** - Pounds of liveweight gained per day.

## B

- **Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)** - Program(s) designed to help beef producers assure that their production methods are not causing defects in beef products.
- **birth weight (BW or B.Wt.)** - Weight of the calf taken within 24 hours after birth.



- **black baldy** – A type of crossbred beef cattle with a white face and black body, most commonly produced by crossing Hereford and Angus cattle (although can be produced by crossing any black breed with any white-faced breed) (Sartwelle et al. 2000).



- **bloat** - Abnormal condition characterized by a distention of the rumen, usually seen on the left side, due to an accumulation of gases.
- **body condition score (BCS)** - A visual score (usually 1 = thin; 9 = very fat) for body fatness which is related to postpartum interval in beef females.
- **brand** - Permanent identification of cattle, usually made on the hide with hot-iron or freeze branding.
- **branding** – process of placing permanent identification on cattle (as described in brand).
- **bred** - Female has been mated to a bull, usually assumed to be pregnant.
- **breech** - Buttocks. A breech presentation at birth occurs when the rear portion of the fetus is presented first.
- **broken mouth** – An animal that has started to lose its teeth (Drovers Cattle Exchange).
- **brucellosis** - Contagious bacterial disease that results in abortions; also called Bang's disease.
- **bull** - Bovine male that has not been castrated. The term usually denotes animals of breeding age.
- **bulling** - Term describing a cow or heifer in estrus.



## C

- **calf** - Young male or female bovine animal under 1 year of age.
- **calve** - Giving birth to a calf. Same as parturition.
- **calving season** - Season(s) of the year when calves are born.
- **carrying capacity** - The maximum stocking rate that will achieve a target level of animal performance on a particular grazing unit under a specified grazing method. Or, the potential number of animals or live-weight that may be supported on a unit area for a grazing season based on forage potential.
- **castrate** - (1) To remove the testicles. (2) An animal that has had its testicles removed.
- **Cattle-Fax** - Nonprofit marketing organization governed by cattle producers. Market analysis and information is provided to members by a staff of market analysts.
- **chute** - A narrow corridor built for livestock to travel through, consisting of parallel panels or fences with a space between them just wide enough for one animal to pass through comfortably without being able to turn around, thus forming the animals into a line that only allows them to go forward. There are a variety of types of chutes that can be used for different activities including loading chutes for placing animals onto a vehicle, or squeeze chutes which can be used for marking or veterinary treatment (Doyle 1979).
- **clean up bull** – In an artificial insemination process, a bull used breed those females in the herd who were not impregnated with A.I. Clean-up breeding usually starts two weeks after AI breeding and lasts approximately six weeks (Burton 2014).



- **closed herd** - Herd in which no outside breeding stock (cattle) are introduced.
- **continuous grazing** - A method of grazing where animals have unrestricted access to an entire grazing unit throughout a large portion or all of a grazing season.
- **controlled grazing** - Grazing management designed to improve utilization of forage either by 1) allocating pasture in subunits with grazing periods typically less than 5 days or 2) varying stocking rate to match forage growth rate and availability (put-and-take stocking).
- **corral** - A pen or enclosure for confining or capturing livestock (Merriam Webster Dictionary).
- **cow** - Sexually mature female bovine animal that has usually produced a calf.
- **cow-calf operation** - Management unit that maintains a breeding herd and produces weaned calves.
- **creep** - Enclosure where calves can enter to obtain feed but cows cannot enter. This process is called creep feeding.
- **cull** - To eliminate one or more animals from the breeding herd or flock.
- **cutting chute** - Narrow chute, where cattle go through in single file, with gates such that selected animals can be diverted into pens alongside the chute; also referred to as a sorting chute.
- **cwt** - Abbreviation for hundredweight (100 lb).
- **cycling** - Infers that nonpregnant females are having estrous cycle.



## D

- **dam** - Female parent.
- **dropped** - Being born (e.g., "the calf is dropped").
- **dry (cow)** - Refers to a nonlactating female (opposite of "wet" cow).
- **dry matter** - Feed after water (moisture) has been removed (100% dry).
- **dystocia** - Difficult birth.

## E

- **estrous** - Adjective meaning "heat" that modifies such words as cycle. The estrous cycle is the heat cycle, or the time from one heat to the next.
- **expected progeny difference (EPD)** - One-half of the breeding value of a sire or dam; the difference in expected performance of future progeny of a sire, when compared with that expected from future progeny of bulls in the same sire summary.

## F

- **fed cattle** - Steers and heifers that have been fed concentrates, usually for 90-120 days in a feedlot or until they reach a desired slaughter weight.
- **feed bunk** - Trough or container used to feed cattle.
- **feed efficiency** - (1) Amount of feed required to produce a unit of weight gain or milk. (2) Amount of gain made per unit of feed.
- **feeder** - (1) Cattle that need further feeding prior to slaughter. (2) Producer who feeds cattle.



- **feedlot** - Enterprise in which cattle are fed grain and other concentrates for usually 90-120 days. Feedlots range in size from less than 100-head capacity to many thousands.
- **finish** - (1) Degree of fatness of an animal. (2) Completion of the last feeding phase of slaughter cattle.
- **finished cattle** - Fed cattle whose time in the feedlot is completed and are now ready for slaughter.
- **foothill abortion** - (Epizootic bovine abortion or EBA) The result of a disease transmitted by the bite of a soft-bodied tick, commonly known the Pajahuello. This tick is endemic in California's coastal range and foothill regions of the Sierra Nevada (as well as other states in the Western US). Foothill abortion is characterized by near-term abortions, or the birth of calves too weak to thrive. The disease afflicts cows that grazed foothill pastures during the first or second trimesters. The tick does not survive well when submerged or damp, so is not often found in irrigated pasture. (Smith 2015, Oliver and Norman 1994)

## G

- **gestation** - Time from conception until the female gives birth, an average of 285 days in cattle.

## H

- **heifer** - Young female bovine cow prior to the time that she has produced her first calf.
- **herd** - Group of cattle (usually cows) that are in a similar management program.



## H (continued)

- **Hereford** – A breed of cattle characterized by a distinctive red body color with a white head, neck and underside. Herefords are valued for their generally docile nature and good beef quality (Cattle Today).



## I

- **intake** - The amount of feed consumed by an animal per day. Intake is usually expressed as a percent of bodyweight or in pounds per day.

## L

- **load** - Pounds (number) of cattle that can be hauled on a large cattle truck. For example, pot load is 42,000-52,000 lb (40-42 head of slaughter steers, 72 yearlings, or 100 calves).
- **long yearling** - Animal between 18 months and 2 years of age.

## M

- **maintenance** - Condition in which the body is maintained without an increase or decrease in body weight and with no production or work being done.
- **market niche** - Segment of consumer demand targeted by a specialized production and marketing plant. Examples include the "white tablecloth" restaurant trade, health foods, and convenience foods.



- **maternal first-calf calving ease** - Ease with which a sire's daughters calve as first-calf heifers (under 33 months of age). Reported as a ratio or an EPD.
- **maverick** - Unbranded animal, usually on the range.
- **minimum culling level** - Selection method in which an animal must meet minimum standards for each trait desired in order to qualify for being retained for breeding purposes.
- **morbidity** - Measurement of illness; morbidity rate is the number of individuals in a group that become ill during a specified time period.
- **mortality rate** - Number of individuals that die from a disease during a specified time period, usually 1 year.
- **mouthed** - Examination of an animal's teeth.

## N

- **natural beef** - Refers to beef from cattle that have not been fed growth stimulants or antibiotics.
- **nutrient density** - Amount of essential nutrients relative to the number of calories in a given amount of food.

## O

- **off feed** - Animal refuses to eat or consumes only small amounts of feed.
- **open** - Refers to nonpregnant females.



## P

- **parturition** - Process of giving birth.
- **pasture rotation** - Rotation of animals from one pasture to another so that some pasture areas have no livestock grazing on them during certain periods of time.
- **percent calf crop** - The percentage of calves produced within a herd in a given year relative to the number of cows and heifers exposed to breeding.
- **performance data** - Records on individual animal's reproduction, production, and possibly carcass merit. Traits included are birth, weaning, and yearling weights; calving ease; calving interval; milk production; and others.
- **polled** - Naturally or genetically hornless
- **postpartum interval** - Days from calving until the cow returns to estrus, or days from calving until cow is pregnant again.

## R

- **replacement heifers** - Heifers, usually between 6 months and 16 months of age, that have been selected to replace cows in the breeding herd.
- **replacements** - Cattle that are going into feedlots or breeding herds to replace those being sold or that have died.



## S

- **seedstock** - Breeding animals. Sometimes used interchangeably with purebred.
- **seedstock breeders** - Producers of breeding stock for purebred and commercial breeders.
- **served** - Female is bred but not guaranteed pregnant.
- **service** - To breed or mate.
- **settle** - To become pregnant.
- **shipping fever** - Widespread respiratory disease of cattle.
- **short yearling** - Animal is over 1 year of age but under 18 months of age.
- **slick** - Livestock with no brand, earmark, or other identification of ownership (Cowboy Showcase).
- **springer** - A cow or heifer close to calving (Beef2Live 2017).
- **steer** - Bovine male castrated prior to puberty.
- **stocker** - Weaned cattle that are fed high-roughage diets (including grazing) before going into the feedlot.
- **stocking rate** - The number of animals, animal units or total animal liveweight assigned to a grazing unit for an extended period of time. Stocking rates are usually expressed on a per-acre basis.
- **stocking density** - The number of animals, animal units or total animal liveweight present at a particular point in time on a defined area (paddock). Stocking density is usually defined on a per-acre basis.
- **switch** - Tuft of long hair at the end of the tail.
- **sire** - Male parent.



## T

- **tagging** - Usually refers to putting ear tags in the ear.

## V

- **veal** - Meat from very young cattle (under 3 months of age). Veal typically comes from dairy bull calves.

## W

- **weaner** - Calf that has been weaned or is near weaning age.
- **weaning (wean)** - Separating young animals from their dams so that the offspring can no longer suckle.
- **weaning weight** - Weight of the calf at approximately 5-10 months of age when the calf is removed from the cow.
- **working cattle** – The action of bringing cattle into the corral and doing some activity with / to them (i.e. vaccinating, tagging, branding, de-horning, deworming, etc.) (Barry).
- **worming** – the use of one of several anthelmintics (wormers) approved for use in cattle to prevent worm parasites in cattle. (Also called deworming.)

## Y

- **yearling** - Animals that are approximately 1 year old (usually 12-24 months of age).



## SOURCES

*All glossary terms and definitions were taken from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association "Glossary of Terms" unless otherwise noted.*

Barry, Sheila. Email Correspondence. 11/2/2017.

Beef2Live (2017). *Cattle Terminology: Bulls, Springers, Freemartins.*

Beef2Live.com. Online: <http://beef2live.com/story-cattle-terminology-bulls-springers-freemartins-0-103895>. Accessed 11/1/2017.

Burton, David (2014). *Clean-up Bulls an Important Player on Beef Production Team Says Extension Specialist.* Agricultural Electronic Bulletin

Board. University of Missouri Extension – CAFNR. Online: [http://agebb.missouri.edu/news/swnews/showall.php?story\\_num=7451](http://agebb.missouri.edu/news/swnews/showall.php?story_num=7451). Accessed 10/30/2017

Cattle Today. *Breeds.* CattleToday.com. Online at: <https://cattle-today.com/Angus.php> and <https://cattle-today.com/Hereford.php>.

Accessed 11/1/2017.

Cowboy Showcase. Cattle Terms. CowboyShowcase.com. Online: <http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/cattle-terms.html#.WgDcmtCnGUk>. Accessed 11/6/2017.

Doyle, Philip W. (1979). *Beef Cattle Yards.* NSW Dept. of Agriculture.

Drovers Cattle Exchange. Glossary of Terms. Cattle-Exchange.com.

Online: <http://www.cattle-exchange.com/content/glossary-terms>. Accessed 11/1/2017.

Gill, Ronald J. (1994). *Anaplasmosis in Beef Cattle.* AgriLife Extension.

Publication B-5098. Online: [http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/87722/pdf\\_616.pdf](http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/87722/pdf_616.pdf)



sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 10/30/2017.

Morter, R.L. and Horstman, L. Treating *for Internal Parasites of Cattle. Animal Health*. Purdue University Cooperative Extension. Online: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/VY/VY-51.html>. Accessed 10/30/2017.

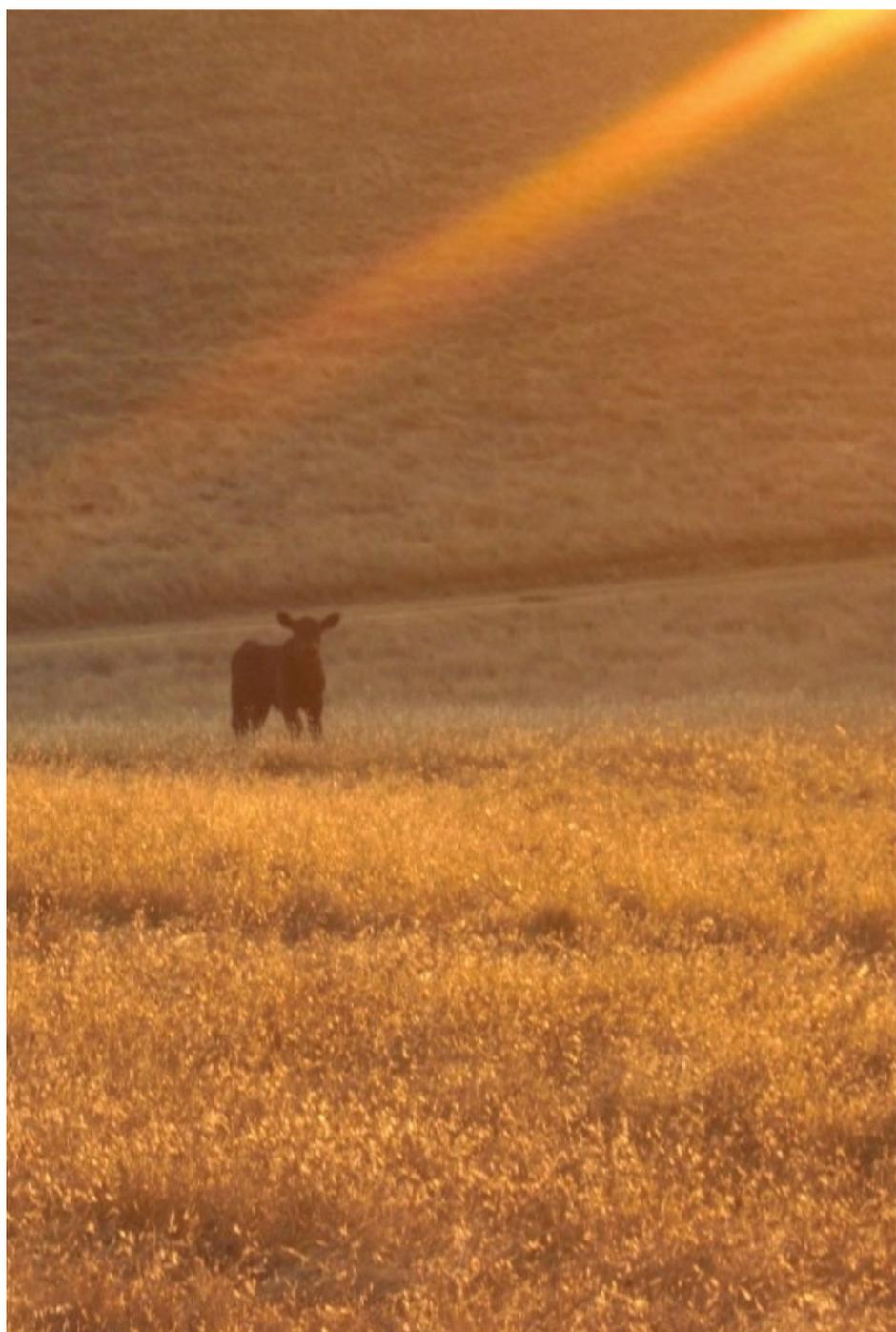
National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Glossary of Terms. National Cattlemen's Beef Association Website. Online: <http://www.beefusa.org/glossaryofterms.aspx>. Accessed 10/30/2017.

Oliver, Michael N. and Norman, B.B. (1994). *Foothill Abortion: A Western States Problem?* California Ranchers' Management Guide. Edited by: Steven Blank and James OItjen. U.C. Cooperative Extension. Online: <https://cals.arizona.edu/arec/sites/cals.arizona.edu/arec/files/publications/28%20foothillabortion94.pdf>. Accessed 10/30/2017.

Smith, Troy. (2015). *Preventing Foothill Abortion*. Angus Beef Bulletin. Vol 8 : No. 9. Online: [http://www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra/2015/09sep15/0915hn\\_preventing-foothill-abortion.html#.WfjaN9CnGUL](http://www.angusbeefbulletin.com/extra/2015/09sep15/0915hn_preventing-foothill-abortion.html#.WfjaN9CnGUL). Accessed 10/30/2017.

Sartwelle III, James D, Davis, E.E., Mintert, J.R. and Borchardt, R. (2000). *Beef Cattle Marketing Alliances*. AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M. Online: [http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/86932/pdf\\_1255.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/bitstream/handle/1969.1/86932/pdf_1255.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed 11/2/2017.







*The work upon which this publication is based was funded in part through a grant awarded by the California Department of Conservation.*

*The statements and conclusions of this publication are those of the grantee and/or subcontractor and not necessarily those of the Department of Conservation, or its employees. The Department makes no warranties, express or implied, and assumes no liability for the information contained within the text.*

