

Beef Cattle Record Keeping Utilization and Application: A Partnership of the Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

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Introduction

The Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote, educate and facilitate the use of beef cattle performance data and record keeping. The Alabama BCIA is formally engaged with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in providing education to beef cattle producers. Alabama BCIA assists its members in use of performance records for herd improvement in production efficiency and quality by providing the Alabama BCIA Commercial Record Keeping Program. Beef cattle producers engaged in the Alabama BCIA Commercial Record Keeping Program were surveyed to assess application of record keeping to operational management.

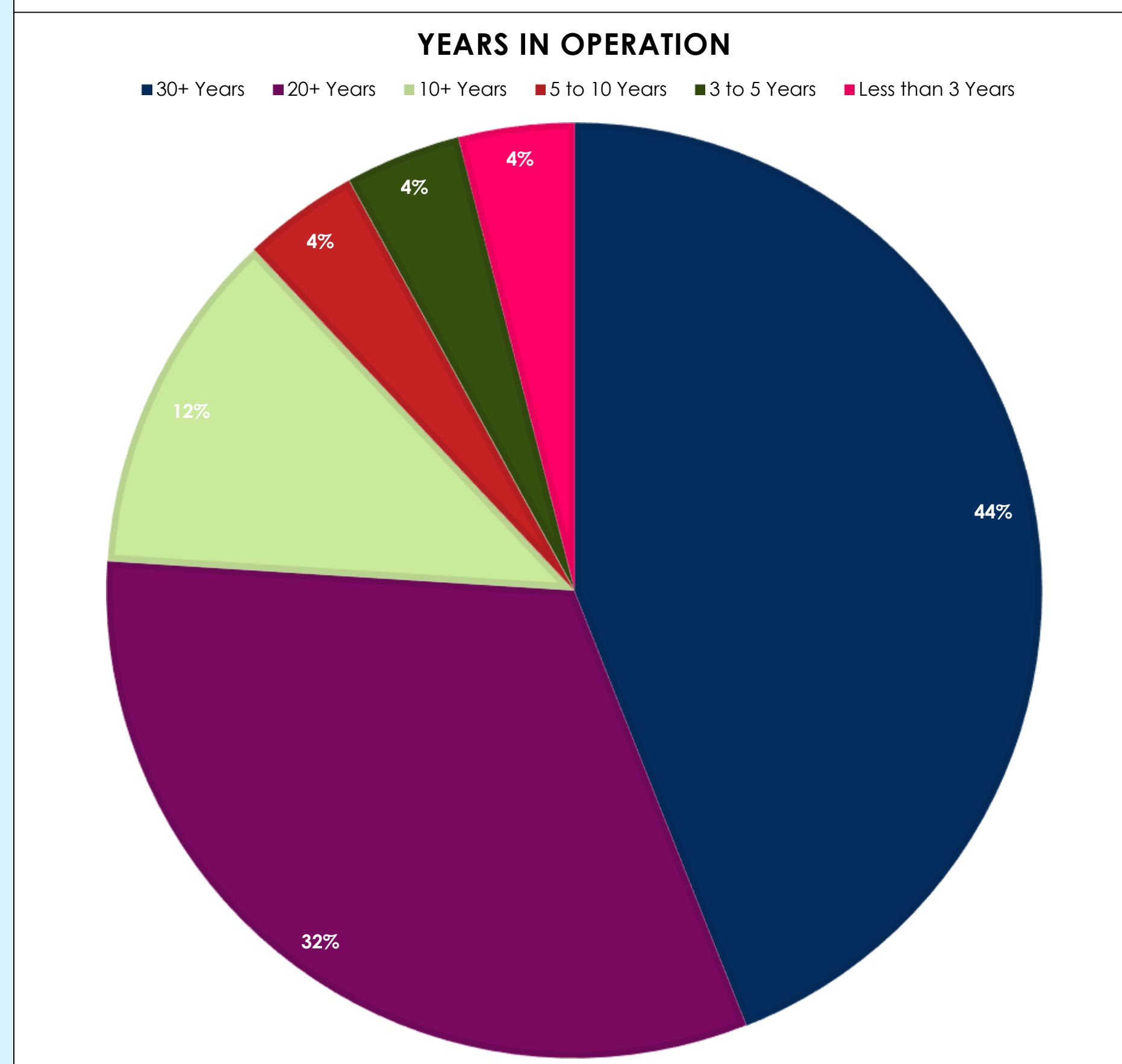
Educational Need

In 2014, the specialized record keeping system utilized by Alabama BCIA transitioned from software-based, centralized processing to an internet-based system to allow for hands-on use. The internet-based CattleMax™ system, www.cattlemax.com, was chosen in this transition. With a unique website link for each herd, multiple types of users can access records via any internet capability, such as desktop and laptop computers, tablets and smart phones. Access to CattleMax™ is included with Alabama BCIA membership. After 5 years, the transition to CattleMax™ needed to be evaluated to verify if the system was meeting the needs for the Alabama BCIA Commercial Record Keeping Program and the engaged beef cattle producers.

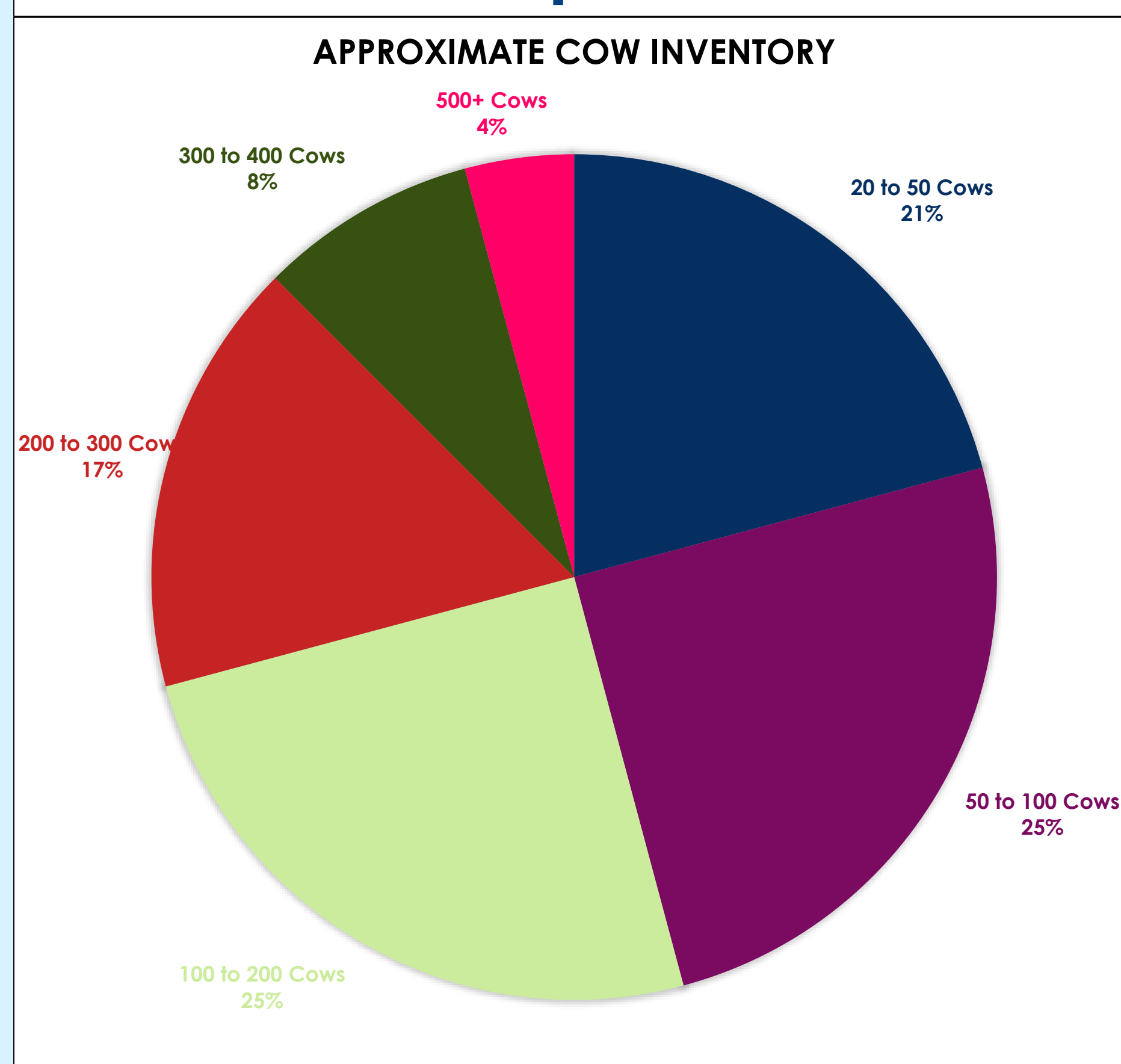
Educational Delivery

A brief, online survey of 14 multiple-choice questions was developed. Question topics included basic demographics, value level, length of use, frequency of use, devices used, record areas, management decisions and meeting needs. The Qualtrics®XM web-based survey tool was used to deliver and evaluate results. A response rate of 44.64% was reached from 56 total beef producers surveyed.

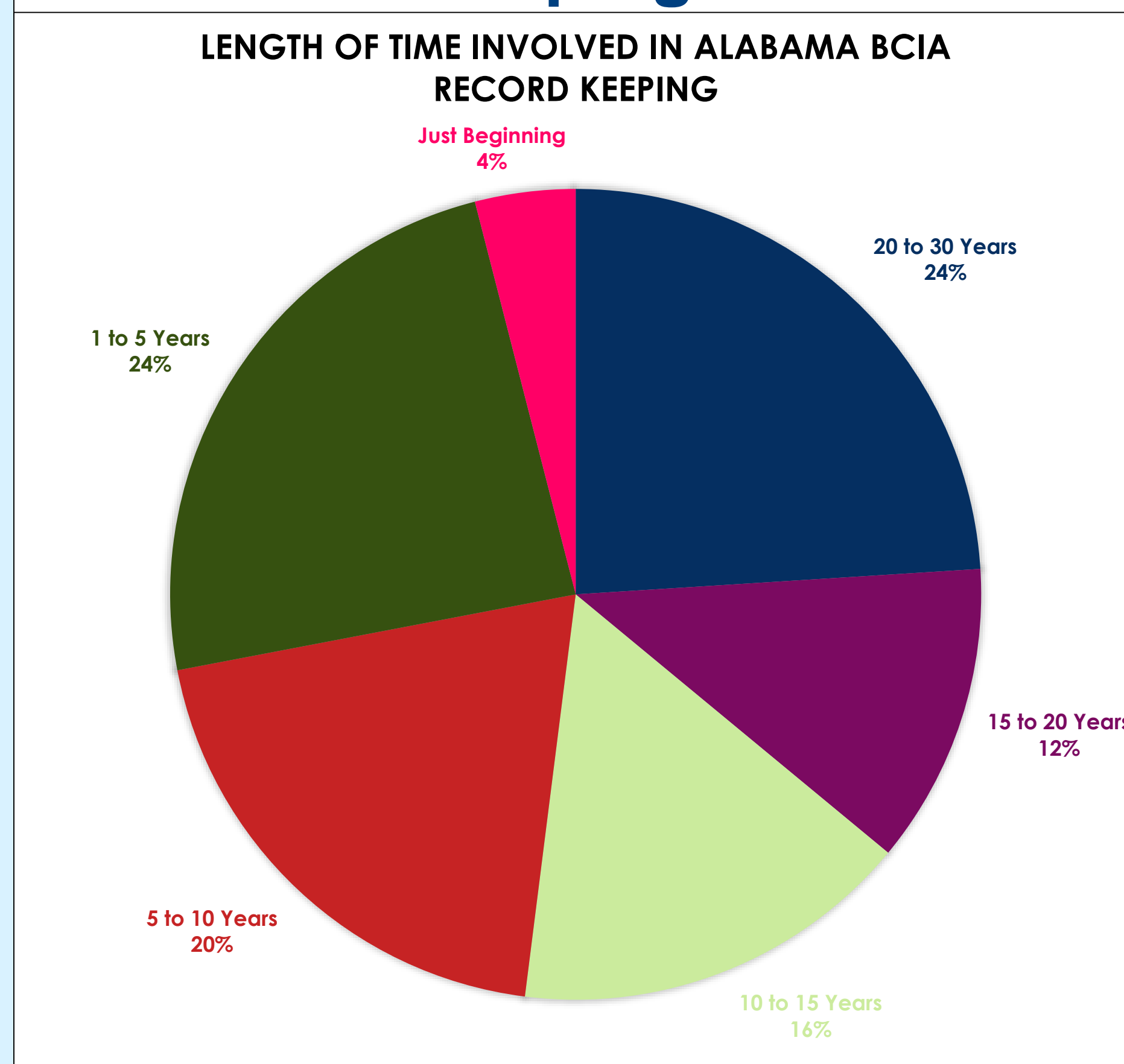
How Long Have You Been in the Commercial Cattle Business?



What is the Current Size of Your Cattle Operation?



How Long Have You Used Alabama BCIA for Record Keeping?



Value and Hands-on Use

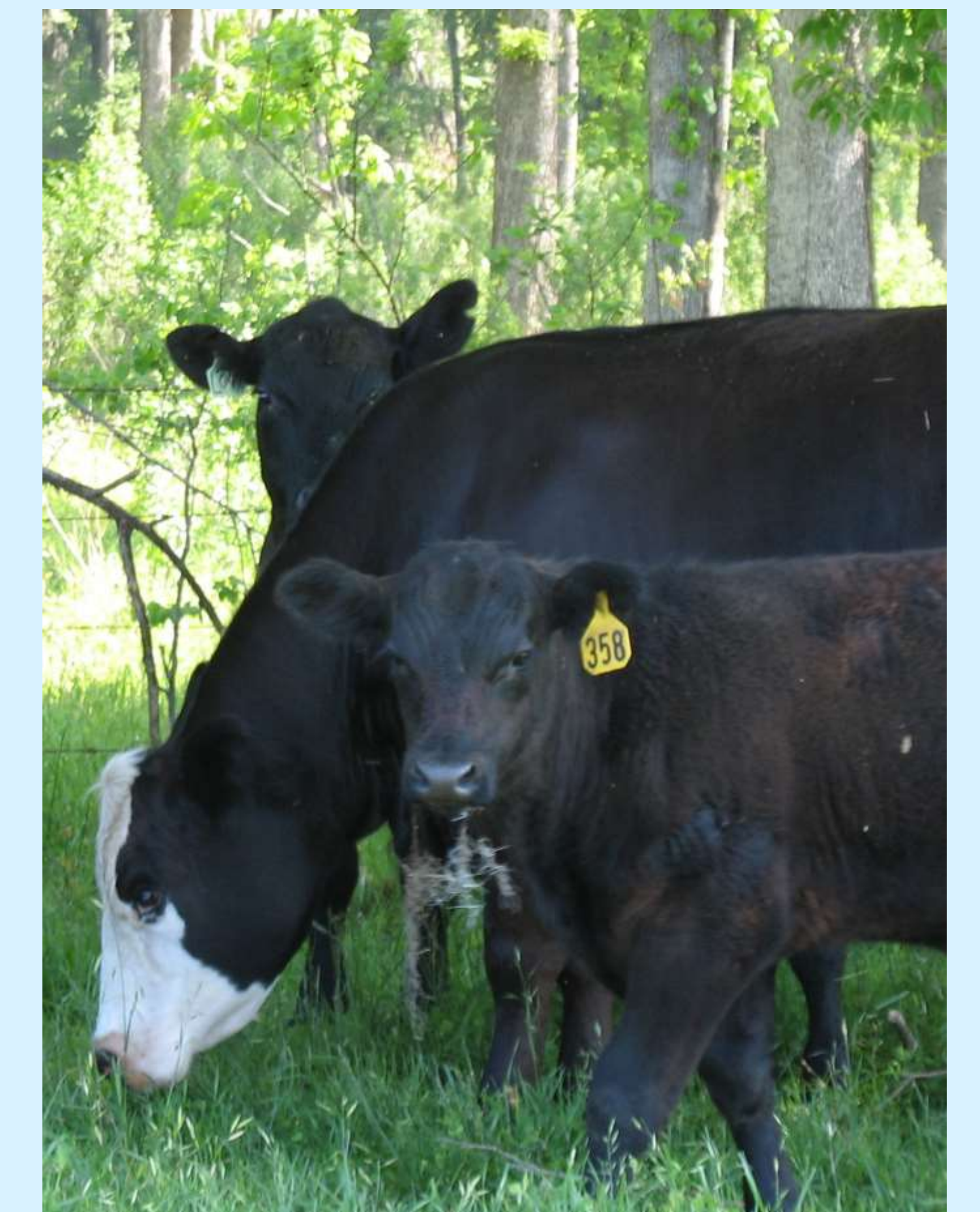
- The value of performance records to cattle operation was rated extremely valuable at 72.0% of respondents.
- Hands-on access to herd records was rated very valuable at 92.0% of respondents.
- Of those actively accessing their herd records, a majority indicated frequency as weekly 40.0%, monthly 20.0% or daily 8.0%.
- The most common device used for online access was a combination of computer and smartphone at 36.0%.

Application

- The most active record keeping areas for data collection and application to management decisions by engaged beef cattle producers was shown to be:
 - Calving records – evaluating calving season success in time span of calving dates & calving distribution– 21.57%
 - Weaning data – weaning weights, adjusted weaning weights & ratios – 19.64%
 - Culling cows based on performance – average calving interval, MPPA, etc. – 17.86%

Planned Expansion

- The most chosen areas of expansion in future record keeping was shown to be:
 - Collection of yearling weights and calculation of ratios for chosen replacement heifers at 22.58% of respondents.
 - Collection of mature cow weights at calf weaning for calculation of percent cow weight to calf weight at 20.97% of respondents.
- Other prominent areas of expansion in future record keeping included breeding records and herd health treatments.



Conclusion

Overall, 88% of responding beef cattle producers indicated the internet-based system was definitely meeting their needs. The transition to an internet-based, specialized record keeping system from centralized processing was successful. Engaged beef cattle producers have shown growth in the utilization of record keeping, both in frequency of collecting records and their application in making management decisions. This increase in use and application has evolved into plans of expansion into new areas of record keeping in the future.



For further information

Please contact elmormf@auburn.edu for more information or please visit www.albcia.com or www.aces.edu

