

Making Smarter Use of Your Phone

Cobie Rutherford – Extension Beef Cattle Associate, Mississippi State University

Although I am not very good with technology, I have to admit, life with a smart phone makes things easier. My cell phone is synced with my personal computer and my iPad. From my phone, I can listen to my eclectic taste in music, keep up with my bank account, and monitor social media. There are apps that I use that can track my calorie intake, watch movies, and even book hotels and flights. I can share documents, pictures, and media files at the push of a button. Like a computer, a smart phone is what you make of it. My article this month will discuss my favorite apps for beef production.

General Phone apps

Some of the general apps I like to use are: Messages, Notes, Voice Memos, Maps and Calendar. Living away from the farm creates many record keeping challenges. My dad, however, is very good at texting me information when a cow calves. I generally try to copy and paste the text message into the Notes app. From there, I can create documents that can be converted to a word document relatively easy. Voice Memos is probably the most underused system app. For me, it's a perfect way to stay safe while driving. If I think of something that I need to do, I can record myself a voice memo instead of fumbling around for a pen and piece of paper. Thanks to features like the Map app, I can find any farm or extension office with ease (most of the time). I live by my calendar app. I keep up with work responsibilities, deadlines, personal appointments, and family obligations on this handy tool.

Reproductive apps

You'll never hear me sing “Rocky Top”, but I give a lot of credit to the University of Tennessee Extension for their Beef Cattle Repro app. This free app allows producers to keep track of the reproductive status of their herd by providing a venue to record things such as bull turnout dates, artificial insemination records, and calving dates. In addition, the app will also send notifications on Management dates.

Two other handy breeding apps are the free apps by Cattle Visions and Bovine Elite. Both include a gestation calculator, sire search, news alerts, and a semen tank inventory feature. Contrastingly, Bovine Elite offers a breeding list to make mating decisions while the Cattle Visions app contains a time AI breeding calculator.

Breed Association apps

Since most breed associations have online portals, anyone with a smart phone has access to the website of their breed of choice by using the web browser. Breed association apps, put the website at your fingertips. As an Angus breeder, I find the Angus Mobile app as a must have. In fact, it has prompted me to store all my registration certificates online just to transfer cattle efficiently. When a producer loads up an animal on my farm, I can immediately submit the transfer. The American Simmental Association features quick access to timely information articles and search features for both members and animals. The American Maine Anjou and American Hereford association apps are for national events, such as national shows, meetings, etc. The Red Angus Association of America's consists of links to download copies of their magazine.

Management apps

There are numerous management apps available for download many are free, but some require a subscription to the services. The University of Florida's and Zoetis' AI Cowculator allows producers to determine if AI could increase their per cow profit. There are quite a few figures that one might not know, but being conservative on estimates should allow for a good indication on whether AI is profitable for your scenario.

South Dakota State University has a pretty cool app called Feedstuffs that is a feed cost calculator. It allows producers to compare different commodity feeds on both costs and nutritional values. Some of the commodities we use in the Southeast are not that common in South Dakota, but the app allows data input for those feeds for comparison purposes.

Another handy management app is the Beef Cow BCS app by Crystalyx. This app is all about body condition scoring. It allows producers to take a picture of an animal and score its BCS based on comparisons to the apps library of cows with body condition scores of 1-9. Information can be saved and referenced at a later date.

The Calf Book app is another useful app that can help manage calving and breeding data. Multiple users can input data into the application and access reports. There is an annual subscription fee with usage, of \$5 for the basic plan or \$15 for the plus plan. Personally, I like this app and think the \$5 per year would be well spent for tech savvy commercial producers. You can learn more at www.calfbook.com.

Sales apps

With online cattle marketing becoming more popular, many sites are beginning to offer apps for ease of bidding. Disclaimer – this could become addictive and could make bidding too easy. Some of the most used apps include: EDJE Mobile Sales, Willoughby Sales, SCO Sales, DP Sales Management, and BreedersWorld.

Hopefully you will find some of this information useful. If there are apps you use, that neither Dr. Karisch nor I discussed, let us know! We'd love to hear how you are incorporating smart phone technology into your herd management!

If you would like to contact me, my email address is cobie.rutherford@msstate.edu and phone is [662-325-4344](tel:662-325-4344).

For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit extension.msstate.edu.