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FEATURED

Research Center moving the needle in cattle nutrition

by Kayla Kirby
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HOLTVILLE — The UC Desert Research and Extension Center (DREC) in Holtville is home to several research projects, including cattle nutrition and feeding systems. Imperial County's top commodity has been cattle for the last 10 years, according to the 2018 Imperial County Crop Report.

While the center conducts its own research, researchers from around the globe are also invited to bring their research projects to Holtville. Dr. Richard Zinn is housed at DREC and has been conducting research on cattle and nutrition in Imperial County for several years.

University of California Cooperative Extension Livestock Advisor Brooke Latack currently conducts research at the center. She covers research relating to livestock in Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernadino counties.

The DREC feedlot in Holtville is the largest research feedlot in the UC system. Latack said it can hold up to 600 head of cattle, making it a valuable tool for the feedlot industry in California.

“Our work has been on calf-fed Holstein steers, raising them from when they leave the calf ranch to their finished weight. We try to focus on things that would directly benefit the cattle feeding industry,” said Latack.

Latack said Holsteins are largely recognized as dairy calves, but the steers produce a high grade of beef in Imperial County. With California being the top dairy producing state in the US, there has been a consistent supply of Holstein steers.

Latack and her team are currently researching heat mitigation and adaptation in feedlot cattle. The team is working on finding feed additives to help cattle deal with the high-heat summer months in Imperial County. According to Latack, this will help the cattle to be more productive.

Other work Latack has done focused on cattle nutrition, including calcium and amino acid requirements for the feedlot steers. She explained her work is applied research, which means the goal is for producers to take what Latack and her team has learned and apply it in their own feedlots.

According to Latack, Imperial County is among the top five producers of cattle in California.

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Reporter