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## **2008—A Year of Change**

**Lockhart, Texas – December 7, 2007 – For Immediate Release** –The Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas (ICA) announced today that 2008 will be a year of change for many cattlemen across Texas. Association President H. A. 'Peanut' Gilfillian said, "This year, most ranchers will have to reassess their present operation and decide which changes will be necessary. The increased costs of feed, fuel and fertilizer are issues that each rancher must carefully consider when planning for the future."

With almost 25% of the nation's corn crop being diverted to ethanol production, the prices of cattle feeds will certainly stay at near record price levels. Supplemental feeding practices will have to be evaluated. Cattlemen will be challenged to determine which feeding methods provide the greatest return on investment.

The fertilization and weed control measures for native and improved pastures will also be under scrutiny as ranchers attempt to stretch their management dollars. The cost of fertilizer has continued to increase as natural gas prices rise. Pasture renovation and smaller amounts of fertilizer per acre must be considered. Soil analysis prior to fertilization, will become a must as ranchers attempt to maximize nutrient values. Pasture stocking rates may have to be lowered to accommodate the new reduced fertilization and weed control programs.

Higher feed prices may bring increased demand for heavier calves at the market place, thus causing higher prices for heavier calves and lower prices for light weight calves. The additional expense of creep feeding calves will have to be closely monitored. Ranchers may want to delay weaning or possibly wean and precondition calves prior to selling to increase market weights of their calf crop. Culling of inefficient and nonproductive cows will definitely be a major tool to reduce costs.

As the cost of gasoline and diesel continues to escalate, cattlemen everywhere will need to evaluate current management practices and feed delivery methods. The customary daily feeding of cubes may need to be replaced with longer lasting supplements such as blocks or molasses tubs. The daily trips to check cattle may be changed to every other day or even less often.

Although ranching expenses will continue to escalate, the future remains bright for cost conscious cattlemen. A shrinking national cow herd and increased foreign demand for U.S. beef should strengthen cattle prices during the coming year. In the meantime ranchers must evaluate their operations and adjust to the changing conditions.

ICA was founded in 1974 to provide strong leadership for Texas cow/calf producers and has grown from its 17 original members to become a voice for thousands of cattle producers. For more information about ICA, visit [www.icatexas.com](http://www.icatexas.com).