## BeefSD Class 7

## Season 1, Episode 38

[Intro music]

**Kiernan Brandt:**

Welcome to Cattle HQ, a podcast from industry experts and progressive producers discussing cutting edge info about the cow calf sector to keep cattlemen and women in the know and positively affect their bottom line.

**Madison Kovarna:**

Welcome to Cattle HQ, brought to you by the South Dakota State University Extension. I am Madison Kovarna, a Beef Nutrition Field Specialist based out of Watertown. Joining me on this episode are some colleagues of mine, Dr. Erin DeHaan and Dr. Krista Ehlert. Dr. DeHaan is one of SDSU Extension’s Beef Specialist and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Animal Science. She serves as a resource on beef production with a diverse background for meat science to cattle nutrition. Dr. Ehlert is SDSU Extension’s Range Specialist and also is an Assistant Professor at SDSU in the Department of Natural Resource Management. Her expertise is in Rangeland Ecology and Management, and she enjoys helping producers adapt conservation practices. Both are based out of our SDSU West River Research and Education Center and are joining me today to share some information about a program named beefSD, but before we dive into that, I wanted to give you both some time to introduce yourself to our listeners. So, Erin, we’ll start with you since I introduced you first. You can give us a little blurb about yourself.

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

Hello everybody. My name is Erin DeHaan, and I am based out of Rapid City. As Madison said, I serve as one of our state extension beef specialists and I look forward to sharing some more information about our program called beefSD with you guys today.

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

Hi, everyone. As Madison said, I’m Dr. Krista Ehlert. I started with SDSU in the fall of 2018. I’m really excited about helping beef cattle producers adapt conservation practices. Some of the research projects that I’m working on include things like virtual fencing and precision ranching like [[Unintelligible]](https://recordings.civi.com/cgi-bin/player.php?file=PC-00002-CattleHQ-E38.mp3&starttime=124&duration=20) carrying restoration using beaver dam analogs, and my extension effort is really focused on working directly with beef cattle producers both through a Women on the Range program, and we have a program that we’re going to talk with you today, beefSD.

**Madison Kovarna:**

I’m very happy to have you both on this episode today. beefSD is a program that I think is a really, really unique program for producers to be involved in that. Before this program was for our newer producers but this year, we have lifted that. We’ll talk about that here in a second but beefSD is entering the seventh class this year. It has been in operation since 2011. Could either of you explain a little bit more about what beefSD is for our listeners who maybe have never heard of this program before?

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

Yes. The beefSD program, it’s a two-year program that really focuses on providing an intensive educational experience to really take beef cattle producers to the next level on their beef enterprise management. Just a really great opportunity for our participants to broaden their knowledge and understanding of multiple aspects of the beef industry and really just learn how to develop the skills needed to be a successful beef business managers.

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

I think Erin did a great job. I think she and I are both advocates that are as the rest of the beefSD team that we really try to have this program be a once in a lifetime opportunity for our beef cattle producers across South Dakota. As a note, we do take producers from other states but really the program helps them set goals, expand relationships, and as Erin mentioned and alluded to really learn about different aspects within the beef industry. So, it really is, Madison, when you look at it, really a gate to plate kind of holistic view of the beef cattle industry.

**Madison Kovarna:**

I think that’s a really insightful wording there of what this program is doing, and Erin had mentioned that it’s a two-year program for these producers. What are some of the expectations that the participants can expect or what learning opportunities are you most excited to offer class seven? I’ll start with you Krista, seeing what your thoughts are on that.

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

BeefSD program is really centered around three different components. First, we have face-to-face workshops, in-person workshops. We also have interactive webinars with our participants. A large part of the program is networking and mentoring and then we also really pride ourselves on offering some pretty unique, robust, out-of-state learning experiences. So, I’ll talk about the workshops a little bit and then I’ll leave the other components for Erin to discuss, but the workshops we meet in person about three times a year is what it averages out to be for anyone that’s concerned about calving season. We get it. We understand it. We live it. Purposely, we don’t meet during calving so that we can accommodate our participants. We really want them there listening, learning, and interacting with each other and our guest speaker. Our workshops take place throughout the state. Once you get yourself there as a participant, all of the expenses are covered. So, we cover your hotel, your food. If you have to pay for a big bus to go somewhere or airfare, that’s all covered by the program. It’s a pretty unique experience again of we bring in outside speakers that are leaders in our field in terms of cattle handling, advance reproductive technologies, you name it. We have a connection to someone who is at the top of their game doing that in the beef cattle industry. I’ll let Erin talk about all the networking and mentoring and some of the out-of-state experiences that are part of the program too.

**Madison Kovarna:**

Thanks, Krista. I think a really unique aspect of this program is just the networking and mentoring component of it. You get the gist with the group participants themselves, but we also get to form connections with the participants and then they get to develop relationships with the different speakers we have come in and talk about different aspects of the beef industry as well. Some of the workshops, we host different ranchers throughout the state; they also get to connect with them and really form relationships that they can continue on after this program ends and we part our ways. I think that’s really a unique aspect of it, and also allows us to form management teams throughout this time and to really just have some more in-depth discussion throughout the duration of this program, and really just help us connect on another level. Then as far as the out-of-state learning experiences, again, I feel that’s a really unique opportunity we have for the participants in this program. In the past, we’ve done two different trips and the reasoning for this is just to try to really touch on all aspects of the beef industry that we can. We’ve had a more production focused trip where we will travel to large commercial feed lots. Maybe go to processing plants and other relevant stops along the way. Then we’ve also taken more of an urban high strip and to expose our participants to what beef marketing and merchandising looks like on a major urban area, or in our larger cities as well and what that looks like for our consumers that are the ultimate endpoint of our beef chain. So, really just offering a lot of unique opportunities and as Krista had mentioned before is giving them that holistic view from beef to plate. So, really excited that we get to have those opportunities throughout this beefSD program.

**Madison Kovarna:**

Absolutely. If I remember right, you guys just traveled this July out to New York with the previous class and that one definitely I watched it through some social media postings. It looked like you guys had a lot of fun out that way. Definitely some good bonding time amongst your participants. That’s just kind of a taste of where you guys can go but it’s definitely going to bring participants out of that comfort zone and experience those new things that we maybe can’t see here in our landlocked Midwest state this way but definitely some things as producers we should get out and see how other people are doing things in different states. You’ve kind of alluded to this earlier but this program is one that operations and/or individual producers must apply for. Would either of you want to discuss how maybe if a couple or a pair from an operation might go through that application process versus maybe an individual producer and give us an insight into what the application process looks like?

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

I’d say really the application process is pretty similar with the exception of if you’re – we have an option you can select if you have a second person applying with you to input their information. We try to keep it pretty straightforward for that so that it’s less confusing on our end I guess too. [Laughter] Krista, do you want to add anything to that?

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

We try to make the application fairly painless on both ends, both for the participants and the beefSD team. As Erin was getting to, it’s really just a means so that we can get to know who you are as a person and as a beef cattle manager, and what your goals are for your operation, yourself, and your family and how this program can really help you achieve that. So, whether you’re applying that to individual or as a couple. We’ve had long-term boyfriend/girlfriends apply together, married couples of course. We’ve seen a lot of people get engaged throughout our program which is fun or apply with your brother or your dad. We really do encourage you if you have someone that you moved your life with and helps you with the management decisions, that you apply together because from all of our participants across the last several years that beefSD have been a program is that they all tell us that the drive home from any of the workshops or the trips or what have you that we put in front of them, that drive home is a paramount to done connecting as a team with their wife, with their husband and really delving into what they learned at a given workshop and how they can adapt it and fit it within their own range and operations. I know Erin agree that two heads is better than one kind of thing and like we’ve said, you really get a lot out of the program so.

**Madison Kovarna:**

With that too, since there is that application process, it sounds like it’s pretty painless to move through with you guys explaining a little bit about that and it seems like it’s pretty user-friendly from my aspect. I know sometimes that online applications can get a little difficult. You guys have definitely taken the time to think about how it looks from the producer and making it as easy to get involved as they can. With this program we talk a little bit earlier that the program does cover some of the fees that are associated with traveling. With this application fee, is there an overarching registration cost through this program. It is two years long. Krista, I don’t know if you could give us some insight into that. Maybe some other things that the program will cover outside of that registration fee.

**Dr. Krista DeHaan:**

Yes, sure thing. The registration fee is $1,500.00 per person. For example, if you do apply as a couple or two people from the same operation, then it would be $3,000.00, would be the total. So, $1,500.00 per person. That really, Madison, a proportion of the total cost the program. It costs us about anywhere from $8,000.00 to $10,000.00 per person to run someone through our program. That $1,500.00 registration fee really amounts to about 20% of the total cost. The program is funded through grants, gifts, and of course, some of those registration fees that come through. If anyone’s worried about making a big payment like that, we are the friendliest bankers you’d ever meet. We are open to any kind of payment plans and installment that you have to do to make it work for you and your family. As we mentioned before, once you drive to the workshop or whatever we’re doing for that particular event, your food, your travel from place to place within a workshop, or on those out-of-state trips that Erin talked about, that’s all covered. The food’s covered. For the out-of-state trips, the airfare is covered. We do a really good job taking care of our participants and making sure that they don’t have to stress about how they’re going to cover things once they get to a workshop because we want them focused on learning, networking, and interacting with one another and us as the instructors and other guest speakers that we put in front of them. It’s a little bit bigger registration fee, that $1,500.00 but you really get a lot for it.

**Madison Kovarna:**

I was going to add to that myself, Krista, that I was looking through the agenda, the rough agenda you guys have for what’s going to happen with this class seven, and to me, that $1,500.00 seems like a steal. Just with the things that you’re going to be doing, the places you’re going to be seeing, and just the sheer amount of information you’re going to be giving your participants. I think that’s the deal of the century, to be honest with you. I appreciate that you mention that this is something that is a large lump sum upfront but it’s something we can definitely work with you on. So, we’ll talk about who we can reach out to with those type of questions here in a second but are there any highlights that either of you is the most excited to see, maybe things that have changed from previous classes? Erin, I’ll start with you to see what your thoughts are? What gets you most excited for this class seven?

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

All right. Thanks, Madison. First, our core curriculum throughout this program is staying the same. Only we’re going to try to incorporate more precision livestock technologies into those different workshops and case studies but this is maybe something I’m surprised about with myself but I’m most excited for, I think it’s our first actual workshop coming up that we’re talking about. Just simply ways to add value to your operation, whether that’s just kind of revisiting some of your marketing strategies or whether that’s talking about ways to incorporate some of these precision livestock technologies into your operation. I think it’s just a really unique aspect. Just a different way to think about it to you. Yes, add value and get a little extra cashflow to what you’re already doing and probably have been doing for quite a few years. So, I don’t think that’s one that maybe I would have picked to say [Laughter] a couple of months ago, but I am getting more excited for that one as we continue to plan that one out with the group.

**Madison Kovarna:**

It’s all about finding things that we maybe didn’t think were super interesting upfront but when we started diving into the nuances of all these topics that definitely can bring up that little kid excitement of what we’re going to be learning in class moving forward. I’m sure for you guys, it’s fun to plan these things for these participants to open their eyes. Maybe some things that maybe they are doing but they never really understood the why and Krista, I’ll ask you the same question. Is there anything for this class seven agenda that you are more excited to see or something that’s been brought back from past classes or anything along those lines?

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

Really good question, Madison. I think as we discussed at the top of the show previously beefSD has been for beginning beef cattle producers and this class seven is funded through a different grant, which means that we’re able to open it up to any beef cattle producer which I think the team is really excited about because one, that brings different ideas and perspectives to the table. Then two, we might have some younger and then middle generation and maybe some from the older generation that apply for beefSD for class seven. I think we’re really going to see a cool interesting mix and vibe within the participants themselves because research have shown that you learn best from your peers and as you discussed that’s also something that we really pride ourselves on as we develop the curriculum for this program. The other thing that I think is really exciting about class seven again is it’s about technology. A lot of us have been hearing a lot about virtual fencing and precision skills. All that stuff is very cool and exciting, and we are talking about that during this class but we’re also going to help producers how do you even figure out what calving cameras to get? What should you be looking at? Then also, can you set up remote stock tank monitors to monitor your water levels if your summer pastures are 25 miles one way from your homeplace. Really, class seven is going to be about I think improving that work-life balance for producers which I know whoever is listening to this, the three of us on here, we all laugh and roll our eyes like what is work-life balance, right? How can we start to incorporate some of these technologies into our range and operation so that, “Hey, you can be sitting at home having coffee with your husband or breakfast with your kids and not having to run out and check water when it’s 95 degrees because you checked it before you got out of your bed on your phone and it’s fine until lunchtime or whatever. I think we’re really excited about just exposing people to new ideas, new technologies. Some of them might not be very expensive but they can be very transformative on this operation. I think that’s what I’m most excited about.

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

Yes, to touch a little bit more about what Krista was talking about there. We are going to be having a focus on these precision technologies coming but also providing just as much emphasis on some of these technologies that have been around for a few years. Say like take implants for example or using artificial insemination and just talking about – these are some more of our applied technologies that we can continue to incorporate and ways just to improve your operation and to help you to be more efficient and be a better business manager but we’re really excited for class seven coming online here too.

**Madison Kovarna:**

I like that the both of you mentioned about the precision livestock technology lens on this class seven which I think was the thing that intrigued me the most was just having the opportunity for these producers to explore these technologies and the world of what is possible now with all of the tech that we have available to us and like you said Krista, some of them aren’t super expensive and they’re pretty transformative not only in managing your schedule but also just allowing us to have the farm, or the ranch, or the operation, whatever it may be work more for us the other way around and give us some time to spend with those that we hold close to us whether that’s a family member, more time to spend with friends or have that extra time to go spend at a coffee shop with your cup of coffee with your friends talking about everything under the sun. I think that’s so important for us in this industry to remember that there is time that we can set aside for those type of things, but we’ve talked a lot about the program and maybe we skipped over some things here but Erin, where can we find additional information on who our listener should contact about this program or maybe some online resources that could give them some more information?

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

Right. You can find more information about our program on our extension website. Just extension.sdstate.edu and then you can either search beefSD or include it at the end in your search engine there, it should pop up pretty easily. There’s a lot of information on them. You can even type beefSD into your search engine. It will probably come up. [Laughter] That’s probably the best landing page to check out. If you need additional information after that, you can feel free to contact myself or Krista. We also have two other group members you can contact who are Stacy Hadrick, as well as Logan Vandermark. So yes, reach out to one of us and we can get you more information if you have any additional questions. We talked a little bit about the application and that is on the actual beefSD page on our extension website but if you would prefer a paper application, we can also get that to you. You can contact myself and we can get that sent to you so you can again send it back.

**Madison Kovarna:**

That sounds perfect. We’re nearing on the end of our time together. So, I’ll offer you guys some opportunity for any closing thoughts or things maybe that we have skipped over that you’ve just remembered as we’re getting closer in our time that you’d like to make sure our listeners get a hold of but, I’ll open the floor to either of you for those closing comments here.

**Dr. Krista Ehlert:**

I think I would just add, Madison, a lot of producers that we all worked with, and others and producers talk amongst them. You know they’re busy. They’re busy. There’s always something going on or something is breaking, or some animal got out, or some family members being problematic. There’s a plethora of reasons or distractions for someone not to do this program. I would really encourage people listening to consider how this program could help you manage those things and manage your time better. Our team is really committed to helping producers work on their business and not just in at their business. Everyone has to fix fence but is fixing fence the thing that you as the owner operator should be doing. Maybe you could be learning how to herd your cattle or maybe an opportunity could come up where you can send your cattle down to a feed bath in Kansas and make some more money retain ownership as they feed and finish out then selling them at the sale barn like everyone does. So, really, I think that there is an opportunity for people considering this program to ask themselves like, “Why not? Why not do it? Why not now?” and really, come with an open mind of how they can learn new things, develop their networks further. We have participants from class one way back in 2010, 2011 and they’re running business deals together. Someone always has extra grass. Someone always has too much cattle and why not make a deal out of it or just sharing and trucking down to a feed lot, you name it. Our past participants have done it. I think one other thing that I would add is we have really seen a tremendous impact in our participants. They’ve increased the acres that they’re running on. They’ve increased their herd size. All of them have indicated that they have improved their financial situation because of what they’ve learned from beefSD. The other really awesome thing is that they all have started to be more open to change and more adaptable. If there’s one thing you need to do successfully in the beef cattle industry is that pivot and constantly pivot and find a way to make it work. Our participants are doing that and they’re having great success.

**Dr. Erin DeHaan:**

Right. I just want to echo everything Krista said. I mean, we really believe in this program and really believe it can have a positive impact no matter what walk of life you come from and what your operation looks like. Really, we just believe this is good for anybody and everybody. This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity that you really don’t want to miss out on.

**Madison Kovarna:**

Absolutely. I agree with everything that you both said. As we close out this episode, I wanted to thank both of you, Erin and Krista, for joining me on this podcast. It’s been a fantastic conversation. BeefSD is a program that I firmly believe every producer should be involved in and that’s not just me saying that because I work here. The information shared and the connections that are developed in a program of this caliber are unmatched especially for the price tag that’s on it. If we look at it, that seem like a lot of money but like you said earlier, it does cost $8,000.00 to $10,000.00 per person to go all the way through it and you’re only going to be paying about 20% of that. So, in order to be in a program that offers this much learning opportunities and new outlooks on production, I think you just can’t beat it, and applications for class seven of beefSD are being accepted until August 26th of 2024, with the program plotted to start in November of this year. With that, this has been Cattle HQ brought to you by SDSU Extension, headquarters for all things beef cattle. Visit extension.sdstate.edu for the latest beef information. Until next episode, stay curious and keep learning.

**Kiernan Brandt:**

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Cattle HQ. Brought to you by SDSU Extension, headquarters for all things beef. We invite you to visit extension.sdstate.edu for the latest beef information as well as subscribe to the show on Spotify. You will also find show notes and resources from today’s episode, until next time. Remember, success is not a goal, it’s a byproduct.

[Outro music]