

#24-AB October 2025

## Alberta 2024 Benchmarks

In 2021, the COP Network launched its first round of data collection. Alberta's initial benchmark data was gathered between 2019 and 2022. A new round of data collection is scheduled for 2028.

When looking at the years from 2020 to 2024, some broad observations can be made when analyzing the data. In 2020, moisture conditions were normal. In 2021, a drought occurred in Western Canada. By 2022, moisture conditions had improved, and cattle prices began to strengthen, though producers also faced higher input costs such as fertilizer and energy. During 2023 and 2024, record-high cattle prices continued, but parts of Western Canada still experienced drought. In these years, input costs continued to rise; but were more moderate compared to the jump in 2022.

### Farm Descriptions

There are 19 Alberta benchmark farms which consist with those featured in the [2024 COP Network summary](#). It should be noted that the COP network is missing data from the Southern part of the province.

Herd sizes range from 37 to 376 head, with an average herd size of 180 head. March and April are the most common calving months, though some benchmark farms calve as early as January and February. Weaning times were more consistent among the farms with weaning taking place anywhere from October to November, with AB-5 being the only one that weans in January. AB-1, AB-2, AB-3, AB-5, AB-8, AB-9, AB-10, AB-11 and LL-03 all background their calves after weaning.

More than half (10) of the Alberta benchmark operations use some form of field feeding, such as swath grazing. Days on full winter feed vary from 117 to 222 days (Tables 1-3). Most farms rely primarily on homegrown feed, whereas LL-01 depends mainly on purchased feed. Hay and silage are the most common feedstuffs, with some farms also utilizing greenfeed.

### What is the COP Network?

The Canadian Cow-calf Cost of Production Network (COP Network) uses standardized data collection which allows for comparison both within and between provinces, and internationally. Since launching in 2021, the COP Network has collected data from over 235 producers contributing to 64 cow-calf benchmark farms that represent various production systems. Each benchmark is based on data from 3-7 producers. Data collection occurs every 5 years with annual indexing of input and output prices, as well as crop and forage yields, in subsequent years. Individual benchmark farm summaries, can be found at: <https://canfax.ca/resources/cost-of-production/cop-results.html>

**Table 1. Farm detail for Alberta benchmark farms**

	AB-1	AB-2	AB-3	AB-4	AB-5	AB-6
<b>Beef Cows</b>	212 head	280 head	172 head	54 head	221 head	152 head
<b>Calving</b>	February	March	April	March	March	April
<b>Weaning</b>	November	November	November	November	January	October
<b>Enterprises</b>	Cow-calf, Background 295 days, cash crop	Cow-calf, Background 125 days	Cow-calf, Background 93 days, cash crop	Cow-calf, Cash crop	Cow-calf, Background 45 days, Cash crop	Cow-calf
<b>Feed</b>	60 days of swath grazing and 190 days on silage, hay, and barley	80 days of swath grazing and 146 days on silage, straw, and barley	54 days of swath grazing and 180 days on hay, silage, and straw	20 days swath grazing and 191 days on hay, straw, and greenfeed	51 days of swath grazing and 184 days on silage, straw, hay, and barley	35 days of swath grazing and 117 days on hay, straw, and grain
<b>Purchased feed</b>	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%

**Table 2. Farm detail for Alberta benchmark farms**

	AB-8	AB-9	AB-10	AB-11	AB-12	AB-13	AB-14
<b>Beef Cows</b>	161 head	376 head	91 head	133 head	263 head	155 head	78 head
<b>Calving</b>	March	March	March	March	March	March	January
<b>Weaning</b>	November	November	October	November	October	November	October
<b>Enterprises</b>	Cow-calf, Background 135 days, cash crop	Cow-calf, Background 70 days	Cow-calf, Background 140 days	Cow-calf, Background 120 days, Cash crop	Cow-calf, Cash crop	Cow-calf	Cow-calf
<b>Feed</b>	40 days of aftermath grazing and 198 days on hay and silage	189 days on hay and grain	219 days on hay	14 days of swath grazing and 198 days on hay	194 days on cereal silage and hay	60 days of swath grazing, 182 days on hay and greenfeed	214 days on hay
<b>Purchased feed</b>	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

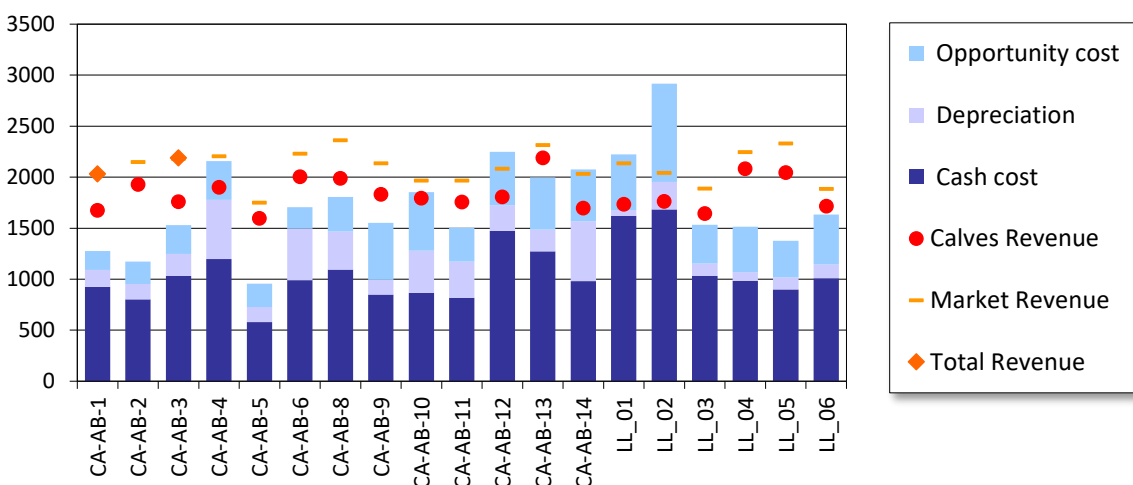
**Table 3. Farm detail for Alberta benchmark farms**

	LL-01	LL-02	LL-03	LL-04	LL-05	LL-06
<b>Beef Cows</b>	131 head	146 head	37 head	240 head	246 head	273 head
<b>Calving</b>	March	March	April	February	January	April
<b>Weaning</b>	October	October	October	November	October	November
<b>Enterprises</b>	Cow-calf	Cow-calf	Cow-calf, Background 208 days	Cow-calf, Cash crop	Cow-calf	Cow-calf
<b>Feed</b>	151 days on hay and greenfeed	230 days on greenfeed, hay and straw	218 days on hay	197 days on hay and silage	200 days on hay and silage	58 days corn grazing supplemented with hay, followed by 85 days on cereal silage and 60 days on hay
<b>Purchased feed</b>	100%	28%	1%	1%	1%	1%

## Benchmarks

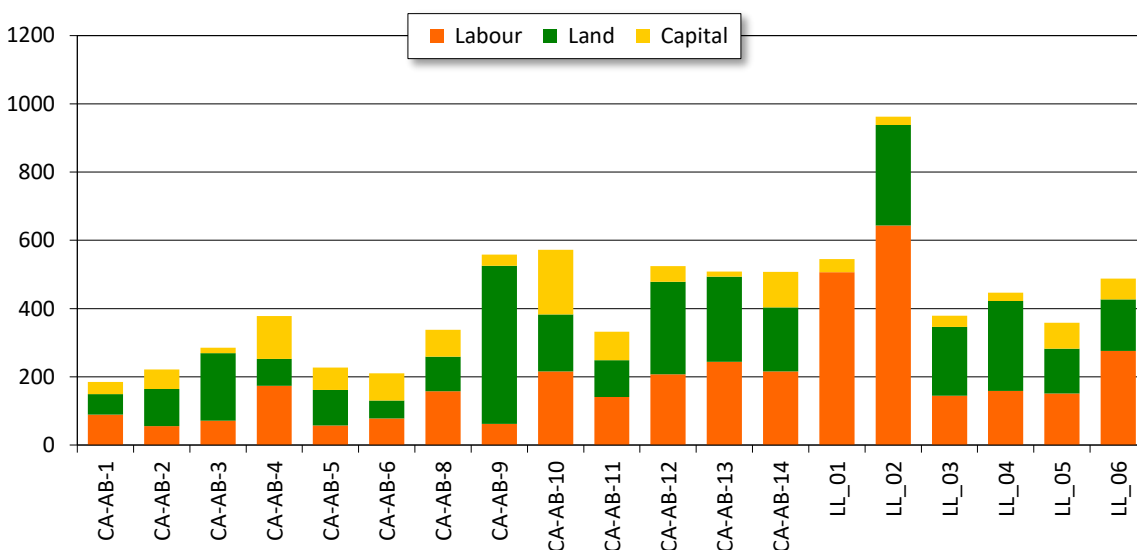
For all Alberta benchmark farms the total cost of production averaged \$1,738 per cow in 2024. On average, 61% of their costs were cash expenses, 15% depreciation and 24% All farms covered their cash and depreciation costs with 15 out of 19 covering opportunity costs to the tune of \$364 per cow.

Cash costs ranged from \$581 to \$1,685 per cow (Figure 2), averaging \$1,059 per cow. Depreciation costs ranged from \$55 to \$587 per cow, averaging \$257. Opportunity costs ranged from \$185 to \$962 per cow, with an average of \$422 (Figure 3).



**Figure 2. Cost of Production for each individual benchmark farm**

Market Revenue = Receipts from calves, calves transferred to backgrounding enterprise, cull animals and breeding stock  
Calf Revenue = Receipts from calves or calves transferred to backgrounding enterprise



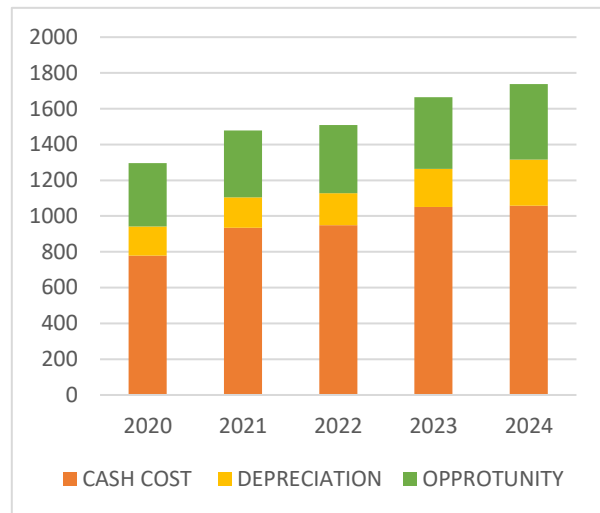
**Figure 3. Breakdown of land, labour and capital for each individual benchmark farm**

## Annual Trends

In 2024, average cash costs were \$1,059 per cow in Alberta. Over the past five years, there has experienced a steady rise in cash costs, with an average annual increase of \$70 per cow. Overall, cash costs increased \$280 per cow, going from \$779 in 2020 to \$1,059 in 2024 (see Figure 4).

Depreciation costs have had an average annual increase of \$23 per cow, with a total increase of \$94 per cow.

Opportunity costs have had an average annual increase of \$17 per cow, with a total increase of \$68 per cow.



**Figure 4. Alberta cash, depreciation and opportunity costs from 2020-2024**

For more information, on ways to stay competitive check out the other COP Network Fact Sheets at [Cost of Production Analysis - CanFax](#)



## Your Calves Deserve the Best Market – Let CanFax Guide You!

### What are your calves worth this week? Canfax knows.

In volatile markets, cow-calf producers can't afford to go in blind. With Canfax reports, you'll see how **steer and heifer prices** are trending across weight classes and regions — before you sell.

- ✓ Compare local and national trends
- ✓ Make informed marketing decisions
- ✓ Know where things are in the cattle cycle

**A Membership gives you the data edge your competitors wish they had.**

Canfax is funded by Memberships: [Subscribe Now!](#)

Or Scan the QR Code for details how



Disclaimer / Copyright Notice: Canfax Research Services (CRS) tries to provide quality information, but we make no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the information. CRS does not guarantee and accepts no legal liability arising from or connected to, the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of any material contained in our publications. Reproduction and/or electronic transmission of this publication, in whole or in part, is strictly forbidden without written consent from CRS.