



#25-AB July 2026

## Alberta 2025 Benchmarks

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

Following the 2021 drought across Western Canada, moisture conditions improved in 2022, while cattle prices began to strengthen. However, rising fertilizer and energy costs continued to put pressure on profitability. From 2023 to 2025, cattle prices continued their upward trend, reaching uncharted levels in 2025. Improved forage yield and lower feed costs further enhanced profitability, providing additional support to cow-calf returns in 2025.

### Farm Descriptions

There are 19 Alberta benchmark farms which are consistent with those featured in the [2025 COP Network summary](#).

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. The COP Network has collected data from over 200 producers contributing to 60 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%              |

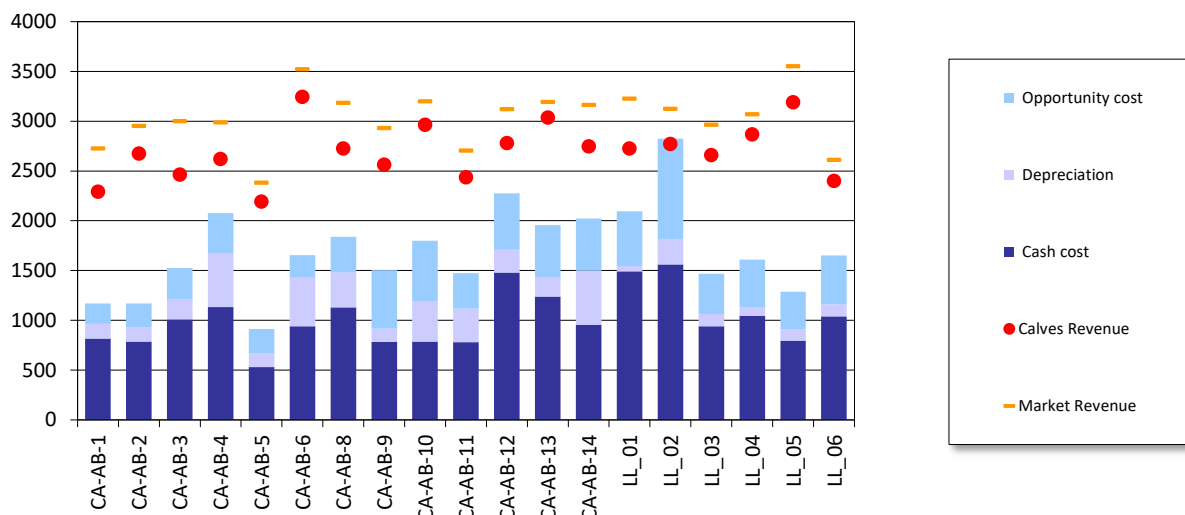
**Table 3. Farm detail for Alberta benchmark farms**

|                       | 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

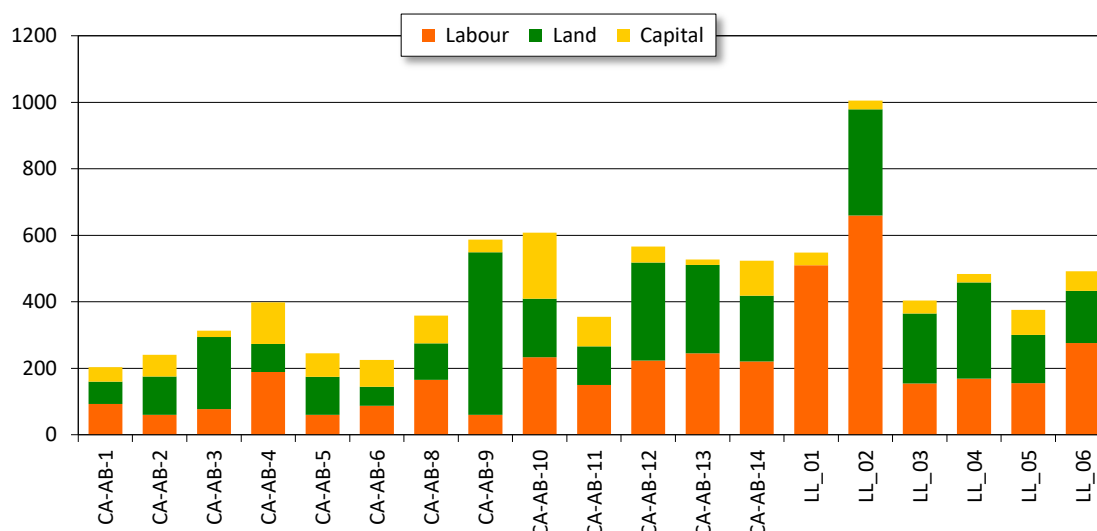
For all Alberta benchmark farms the total cost of production averaged \$1,701/cow in 2025. On average, 60% of the total costs were cash expenses, 14% depreciation and 26% opportunity costs. All farms covered their cash, depreciation and opportunity costs, generating an average return of \$1330/cow.

Cash costs ranged from \$532 to \$1,562/cow (Figure 2), averaging \$1,013/cow. Depreciation costs ranged from \$54 to \$545/cow, averaging \$242. Opportunity costs ranged from \$204 to \$1,006/cow, with an average of \$445 (Figure 3).



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



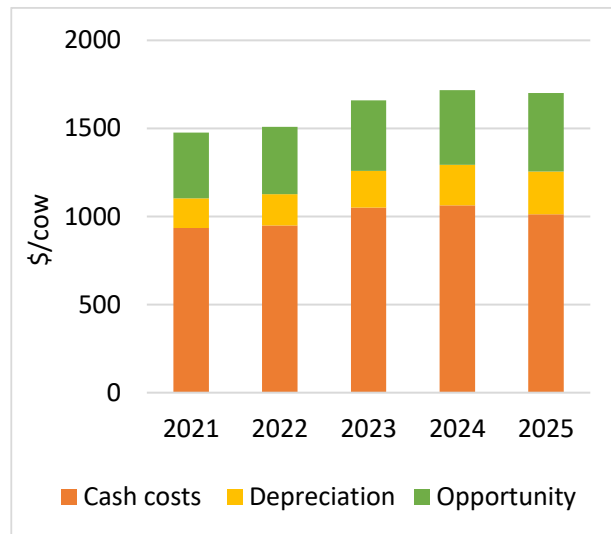
**Figure 3. Breakdown of land, labour and capital for each individual benchmark farm**

## Annual Trends

In 2025, average cash costs were \$1,013/cow in Alberta. Over the past five years, cash costs have trended upward apart from a slight decline from 2024 to 2025. Cash costs increased by a total of \$78/cow, from \$935/cow in 2021 to \$1,013/cow in 2025, with an average annual increase of \$20/cow (Figure 4).

Depreciation costs have had an average annual increase of \$18 per cow, with a total increase of \$73/cow.

Opportunity costs have had an average annual increase of \$18/cow, with a total increase of \$72/cow.



**Figure 4. Alberta cash, depreciation and opportunity costs from 2021-2025**

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



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