As part of the Long Term Agricultural Research Network, we are studying attributes of Criollo cattle and comparing their productivity to traditional Angus-cross cattle raised in an arid environment.
Raramuri ("Light-footed ones") Criollo — "New World" Cattle

- Obtained from isolated areas of Sierra Tarahumara (Copper Canyon) in southwestern Chihuahua, Mexico
- Long history of adaption to arid rangelands; ~200 generations of "natural" selection in Mexico since introduction by Spaniards 500 years ago
- Smaller frame size (mean weight 330-360 kg) with market weight in 30 months with quality meat grades
- May be suited to cross bred program with old world cattle to reduce time to market
- Little information exists on physiology, behavior, or dietary preferences
Beef producers in southwestern U.S. face a number of challenges

- Low and variable precipitation
- Degraded rangelands/shrub invasion
- Low and/or irregular forage production
- Distance between watering points
- Rough terrain

Public lands are important sources of forage, but these lands must provide multiple ecosystem services besides livestock production.
General Hypotheses regarding Criollo

- Fewer inputs of harvested forages and supplements to reach market weight
- Less impacted by variable climate and forage conditions typical on semi-arid rangelands
- Travel further from water and utilize landscape more efficiently when forage is scarce
- Reduced environmental footprint with diversification of other ecosystem services
Preliminary Data and Anecdotal Observations

- Shorter grazing time per day (~ 1 hour less)
- Travel further per day (~ 1 km more)
- Travel further from water and further upslope
- Wider diet breadth
- Require fewer inputs (i.e., supplement)
- Higher net economic returns than traditional crossbred cattle IF include criollo bred heifer sales (high market value for these bred females)