

# Feeding and Finishing Fall Born Calves in North Dakota

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Cattlemen are considering alternatives to traditional spring calving. Fall calving reduces labor needs during calving and appears to reduce the incidence of sickness in young calves. Since fall born calves are weaned in the spring, management alternatives were sought for calves during post weaning.

A retained ownership demonstration project was conducted to determine the feeding and grazing performance of fall born calves. Three North Dakota producers consigned 40 head (572.2 lb wt avg) of fall born, spring weaned steer calves on May 13, 1997. The calves were weighed, assigned value, and placed on feed at the NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center Livestock Unit. After a 20 day conditioning period, one-half of the calves were placed on a finishing diet for 189 days and were harvested in December 1997. The remaining calves were pastured at the Central Grasslands Research Center for 106 days prior to placing on a finishing diet at the NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center Livestock Unit for 140 days and were harvested in February, 1998.

Overall average daily gain for the nonpastured calves was 3.386 lb. per day while the pastured group averaged 2.739 lb. Although the nonpastured calves had a better average daily gain and 57 less total days on feed before harvest, their overall cost of gain, \$.351 per lb. gain, (interest expenses not included) was higher than the pastured calves, \$.301 per lb. gain. Break-even price at harvest was \$2.293 per cwt. lower for calves that were pastured before placing in the feedlot as compared to calves that were placed directly into the feedlot. However, due to fluctuations in the fed cattle market, actual market price was \$1.90 per cwt. (shrunk live weight) lower for the pastured calves as compared to the non-pastured calves.

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## Post weaning performance of fall born calves, 1997-1998.

	Conditioning	Feedlot Only	Pasture-Feedlot	
		Feedlot	Pasture	Feedlot
Average in Weight, lb.	572.23	630.20	623.00	768.25
Average out Weight, lb.	628.13	1270.10	768.25	1297.00
Days on Feed	20	189	106	140
Average Daily Gain, lb.	2.795	3.386	1.370	3.777
Dry Matter per lb. Gain	4.904	6.884	--	7.089
Feed Cost per lb. Gain	0.215	0.315	0.234	0.351
Total Cost per lb. Gain	0.436	0.471	0.270	0.480
Break-even, \$/cwt. Live	84.244	65.535	73.764	63.242