

Identifying Fast Growing Genetics - NDWS Steer Classic Feedout Project

K.F. Hoppe, R. Danielson, and D. Hildebrant

Superior cattle genetics are necessary to remain competitive with other livestock species in the production of edible meat. Identification of these cattle with excellent feedlot performance and carcass characteristics is necessary for future business growth. Since fast growing calves have excellent feedlot performance and can be harvested at 12 months of age, identifying the impact on carcass characteristics is needed. A feedlot feedout contest was developed for North Dakota cattle producers interested in understanding the value of their cowherd's genetics

In conjunction with the North Dakota Winter Show, the Performance Steer Classic - Pen Division competition was developed for multiple consignments of three or four steer calves. After a five-month feeding period where calves were offered a similar diet and fed in a common pen, the calves were exhibited in groups of three at the ND Winter Show and then harvested for collecting carcass data. Cattle groups were ranked based on feedlot and carcass performance. Scores were determined by weight per day of age (25% of score), average daily gain on test (25% of score), retail product value per day of age (40% of score), and pen uniformity index based on variation within the pen for retail product (10% of score).

Cattle consigned to the feedout project averaged 670.2 pounds upon delivery to the Carrington Research Extension Center Livestock Unit on October 1, 1999. After a 152-day feeding period with no death loss, all cattle consigned averaged 1150.65 pounds (shrunk weight). Average daily feed intake per head, as fed, was 26.39 pounds while pounds of feed required per pound of gain were 8.35. Diet dry matter was 80%. After 131 days on feed, three calves from each consignor were selected for the pen-of-three competition.

The calves selected for the pen-of-three contest averaged 363 days of age and weighed 1166.3 pounds per head at harvest. Average daily gain was 3.52 pounds while weight per day of age was 3.22 pounds. Retail meat product value averaged \$1152.47 per head and retail product value per day of age averaged \$3.18 per head.

Although retail product value is very important, the pen with the highest average retail product value per day of age did not place first. Instead the pen with the highest uniformity, i.e. cattle with similar retail product value, placed higher. This infers that while steers with exceptional growth and carcass characteristics are valuable, having uniform exceptional steers is more valuable.

Affiliation of coauthors and non-CREC staff: R. Danielson, NDSU Associate Professor, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, D. Hildebrant, Manager, ND Winter Show.



Steers entered in the NDWS Steer Classic Feedout Project.