

Discovering Value in North Dakota Calves: The Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout Project IX

Progress Report 2009-2010

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Cattle ranchers in North Dakota are exploring the value of the calves they produce by measuring feedlot performance and carcass characteristics. The Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout project was developed to discover the actual value of spring-born beef steer calves, provide comparisons between herds, and benchmark feeding and carcass performance. Cattle consigned to the feedout project averaged 625.1 pounds upon delivery to the Carrington Research Extension Center Livestock Unit on October 17, 2009.

After an average 199-day feeding period with 0 percent death loss, cattle averaged 1277.4 pounds (at plant, shrunk weight). Average daily feed intake per head, as fed, was 29.5 pounds while pounds of feed required per pound of gain were 8.9. Diet dry matter was 78 percent. The pen-of-three calves averaged 396 days of age at harvest. Overall pen average daily gain was 3.28 pounds. Feed cost was \$0.378 per pound and total cost of gain without interest was \$0.554. The cattle were marketed on May 5, 2010 and marbling scores averaged 420.1 (low choice). Profit before interest expense ranged from \$121.68 per head for pen-of-three cattle with superior growth and carcass traits to a loss of (\$63.70) per head for a pen-of-three with poorer feedlot and carcass performance. The feeding and carcass value of spring born calves can be determined with participation in a feedout project.

Overall, cattle feeding provided a \$296.59 per head profit including death loss but not interest expense. However, the top profit pen-of-three calves with superior genetics returned \$411.90 per head while the bottom pen-of-three calves returned \$166.31 per head profit. The average of the top five scoring pens of steers averaged \$371.02 per head while the average of the bottom five scoring pens of steers (dead loss not included) averaged \$241.20 per head. The overall pen-of-three average was \$275.08 per head profit (Table 1).

Table 1. Feeding performance - 2009-2010 Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout.

	Average Birth Date	Average Harvest Weight	Average Daily Gain	Average Weight per Day of Age	Marbling Score	Ave Retail Product Value /DOA	Ave Feeding Profit or Loss / Head
average of top 5	1-Apr-09	1,390.37	3.86	3.65	484.6 (low Choice)	\$4.76	\$371.02
average of bottom 5 with no deads	1-Apr-09	1,151.70	3.12	3.02	378 (high Select)	\$4.07	\$241.20
Average	4-Apr-09	1,250.50	3.53	3.31	408.7 (low Choice)	\$4.33	\$275.08
Standard Deviation	12.407	100.645	0.306	0.216	57.358	0.303	76.686
Number	39	39	39	39	39	39	39

Calf value is improved with superior carcass performance. Feedlot performance is also important for increased weight gain and heavier carcass weights. Exceptional average daily gains, weight per day of age, marbling score and retail product value can be found in North Dakota beef herds. Feedout projects provide a source of information for cattle producers to learn about feedlot performance, genetic differences, and discover cattle value.