



BeefTalk: Tough Decisions at Cow Culling Time

Now is the time to cull those extra market cows and bulls.

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Fall is fast approaching. Last week we had high temperatures near 100 degrees. Lows are forecast for the 30s by midweek as we prepare for seasonal change.



If summer is defined as a growing season, there was no summer for some people. Others had a great summer.

Regardless, summer has departed and fall is making its presence known. This fall is going to be difficult for many producers because high prices have translated into high costs. This has eliminated any margin for error.

The financial world has been, is and always will be tough. Forgiveness is not a commonly used financial term.

There are those who can dabble on the edge and spend more than they receive. For those, the entertainment value of the beef business is transient and they move on, generally, in a rather grandiose way.

The increased cost of inputs needs to be met with increased output and value. Simple balancing is not enough.

As producers monitor costs, what is eating and utilizing the ranch or farm resources needs to be monitored. Now is the time to cull those extra market cows and bulls. Culling deeply is an old concept to seasoned cattle producers.

Times change and, with that change, stocking rates and feed resources change as well. As a reminder, those changes in inventory should start with a no-excuses mind-set.

All open or structurally unsound cows should go. Even though the cows were evaluated last spring, now is the time to pregnancy check and evaluate for summer injuries that will become major unsoundness as time goes on.

In addition, look for those cows that are dry, even though they were sent to pasture with a calf at side. Calves have a way of finding milk, even if their own mother was not the source.

Poor mothers need to go. Wild mothers need to go. In high-cost years, do not gamble on marginal cows because some simply will be marginalized with winter and their value will be lost.

Be critical of late-calving cows and develop some packages of bred cows that do not match your desired calving time. For example, sell the younger cows that did not calve in the first three weeks of the calving season.

Late-calving mothers will not produce as heavy of a calf. Review your records to make informed decisions that will allow you to retain more of the super-productive 5- to 8-year-old cows.

Get those old cows (9 and above) gathered and packaged for sale. If there is a need to go deeper, keep in mind a cow reaches her prime at age 5, so 5- to 8-year-old cows have excellent value as bred cows and have the maximum opportunity to produce big calves.

Even though you, as the producer, may not get the rewards of the good breeding values, the cows should catch the eyes of those with feed at a well-advertized bred cow sale. This plan can help put some needed cash back into the operation and lessen the drain on feed resources.

There is no way to make old cows young and young cows will be old cows soon. The bottom line is to sort the most productive cows and sell the rest.

A cow must have a positive cash return. Also, don't forget that market cow income is a significant part of the operation, so market smart.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association recently published the "Executive Summary of the 2007 National Market Cow and Bull Beef Quality Audit." Several good points were made on the management and processing of market cows and bulls.

The result is a better product, a more valuable product and more dollars back to the producer. Some more pointers next week.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Attachments



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(bt090408.pdf - 14.91 Kb)



EPS - Fall Cow Sorting List
(bt090408.eps - 211.06 Kb)