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## BeefTalk: Three Numbers to Think About

**Today's successful beef operators evaluate their records against benchmarks.**

Images



Three Numbers to Think About

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NDSU Extension Service

Calving time is imminent. This is easy to see as the cows settle into the final weeks of gestation.

Cows are a bit slower to get up. Their movement is not as decisive and the placement of feet is more careful.

There is a noticeable decrease in the willingness to jockey for the pecking order. A certain contentment descends upon the herd prior to calving.

The cows are not stomping at the gate or pushing on the fences. The cows just lie around, chew their cud and watch the sun rise and set - except those cows that still seem headed to the gym.

These "gym" cows are moving up the pecking order, grabbing the choice morsel of hay or protein cube. These cows show no evidence of a bulky middle and all their joints are well-intact and secure. These are the nonpregnant, freeloading critters.

These open cows are one of three major data points that make the difference for successful beef cattle operators. Aborted cows and dead calves are the other profit thieves.

Successful managers extrapolate information into meaningful data. Today's successful beef operators evaluate their records against benchmarks.

In the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association's CHAPS program, benchmarks are the barometers. Let's begin by reviewing the

columns

**[Dairy Focus: Dairy Focus: Economic Conditions Could Get Ugly](#)** (2009-02-05)

The economy likely will get worse before it gets better for dairy producers. [FULL STORY](#)

**[Biofuel Economics: New Energy Economics: Japanese Consumers: What is Carbon Footprint of N.D. Grains?](#)** (2009-02-12)

The grain industry is getting more questions from Japanese consumers who want to know what the carbon footprint is of the foods they are consuming. [FULL STORY](#)

**[BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Three Numbers to Think About](#)** (2009-02-19)

Today's successful beef operators evaluate their records against benchmarks. [FULL STORY](#)

**[Hortiscope: Hortiscope](#)** (2009-02-19)

Ron Smith answers questions about plants, trees and gardens. [FULL STORY](#)

**[Livestock Market Advisor: Market Advisor: U.S. Sheep and Lamb Inventories Decline](#)** (2009-02-12)

Current prices are being impacted by the economic meltdown and less demand for all meat, including lamb. [FULL STORY](#)

**[Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Slim Down Your Recipes](#)** (2009-02-19)

Sometimes, simple changes can make major differences in a recipe's calorie, fat and sodium content. [FULL STORY](#)

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percentage of cows exposed to the bulls that actually wean a calf.

Within CHAPS, 90.8 percent of the cows wean a calf, leaving a freeloader rate of less than 10 percent. The data shows that 6.5 percent of the exposed cows were diagnosed as open or failed to calf in the spring, 0.73 percent of the cows were pregnancy checked and failed to calf (estimated abortion rate) and 3.03 percent gave birth to a calf that died sometime between birth and weaning.

These numbers affect the profit center immensely. If the typical weaning weight is 560 pounds, a producer with 100 cows fails to haul out 5,600 pounds of calf in the fall. This is assuming a 90 percent weaned calf rate (rounding 90.8 percent down to whole calves).

The calves simply are not present. Regardless of how one values the calves, the potential income from 5,600 pounds is no small change.

In business, the loss (dollars) needs to be made up. All those cows that do not raise a calf still generate bills that need to be paid.

There is another thought. If the typical 100-cow herd is weaning 500 pounds of calf per cow exposed, 50,000 pounds of calf is weaned.

Ideally, every cow exposed would wean a calf. If every cow weaned a calf and those calves averaged the typical 560 pounds, then the potential total pounds weaned would be 56,000 pounds.

Of the missing 6,000 pounds of calf, more than 93 percent of the missing weight is due to open or aborted cows and dead calves. Improving these numbers should be the goal of every beef operator.

Several things cause open cows. There is enough research to suggest that nutritional failings would be high on the list. Right now, cattle that are underfed or fed improperly are busy subtracting from the bottom line or profit within a beef operation.

Likewise, those cattle that are not vaccinated for common diseases also are busy subtracting from the bottom line or profit. Prevention of future income losses start today.

Total herd performance is planned and executed months in advance. Those weak, poorly nourished calves with weak immune systems

and cows that are slow to cycle are produced and do not occur by accident.

Proper management means precalving preparation. Precalving preparation actually starts prior to breeding by using effective vaccination programs and good nutrition.

So, look those cows over well. Start thinking about calving, as well as next year's breeding program.

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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#### NDSU Agriculture Communication

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#### Attachments



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