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## **BeefTalk: Data Needs to be Collected to Aid Management Plans**

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By now everyone has thoughts on what to do with this year's calves. The usual questions are cropping up. When do I sell? Should I sell? Should I keep extra heifers? Should I retain ownership? Should I background? No wonder this business is complicated. Options are everywhere, but long-term solutions and planning are often much harder to find.

The 2000 calf you plan to wean was conceived 16 months ago. If you retain ownership in your calves, you have simultaneous control of three calves at one time: one in the feedlot, one on the cow and one in the cow.

How we make these decisions and control the details is the key to successful management. Consider these questions: Are we in control? Are we really making decisions that shape the future of the operation? Or is chance in the driver's seat?

Management--and the answer to the above questions--can be assisted by knowledge gained through collection of data. Data are factual information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation. This is where long-term solutions and planning are born.

Let's apply this definition to beef management and the answer to the previous questions regarding sale of calves.

Budgets for the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center are based on \$500 gross value per calf sold. Logic would say that as soon as I can achieve that value I should sell. But I need to think beyond gross revenues. I need to consider net profit and the cost of capturing the data needed to make next year's decisions. Without data, I'm not managing.

The center has collected data on sires for the past five years. Is there any difference in the overall value of the calves produced from different sires? A look at a cross section of three years data regarding the market adjusted net return back to the cow for eight sires used at the DREC shows sire 1400 returned \$140.17; sire 336C showed a return of a negative \$6.24. The range in value of a calf from the sires used was a whopping \$146.41 per calf produced at the center.

How can anyone tell me I don't need or shouldn't collect this data? Remember the definition of data -- factual information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation.

Now, call in management. Effective management needs data. I need to know the real value difference between the calves produced from different sires. Now I can make a decision and get rid of Sire 336C or find a different marketing plan for his calves. These calves are obviously not holding up in the current plan.

The ranges that we calculate are not absolute values for each of these bulls because a common carcass price adjusted for the value of each individual carcass is used to compare sires across years. The point I want to make is that there is value to data.

Regardless of how or when you sell your calves, is the up-front price providing for some sort of informational return to aid your future management? If the answer is yes, congratulations on establishing a good relationship between areas of your business. If the answer is no, look for some other relationship or perhaps select a random set of calves and put in a feed out trial to have the best of both worlds -- money and data.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://www.BeefTalk.com). For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.com](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet. In correspondence about the

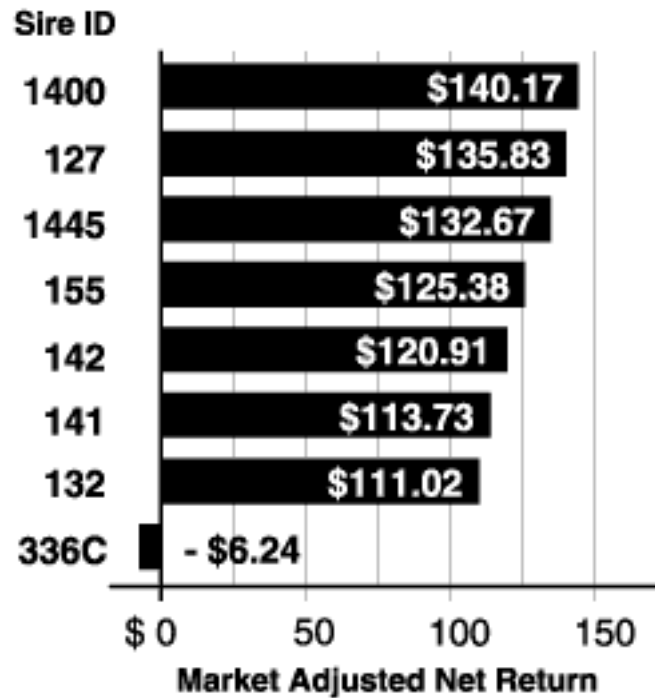
information in this column, refer to BT005.

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### **Market Adjusted Net Return of Eight Sires Used in DREC Herd**



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