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NDSU Extension Service

BeefTalk: Be Aware of Needs, Supply When Looking to Buy Bulls

By Kris Ringwall, Extension Beef Specialist,

A new calf crop is here. The breeding decisions of last spring and summer are taking shape. The new calf crop, however, is only part of the equation. Other aspects of the operation are demanding your time and attention: sire selection for the 2002 calf crop, how the 2000 calf crop is finishing in the feedlot, and a dozen other details as spring approaches.

At the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center Ranch, we are watching the new calves bucking and jumping. These are the same calves we will be keeping track of next year at this time.

At present, the center has 118 steer calves (from the 2000 crop) in the feedlot. They seem to be doing fine. No dead slips yet, and the cattle are

all eating. The steers checked in on Friday, Dec. 15, with an average weight of 693 pounds and a range of 462 pounds. The heaviest steer was 928 pounds, the lightest 466 pounds.

This spread is wider than desired. With the electronic cattle management system, the cattle are sorted following acclimation to the feed yard. Cattle are sorted to pens to meet targeted market dates and results in several pens with different market dates for the 118 head of steers.

In addition, the cattle were ultrasounded for back fat at arrival and they averaged 0.11 inches. The maximum was .25 inches and the minimum was 0.04 inches with a range of 0.21 inches. Average hip height was 46 inches. The maximum was 50.5 inches and the minimum was 41 inches with a range of 9.5 inches. Weight and back fat will be monitored throughout the feeding period to keep track of individual animal performance.

As of mid-February, the calves had been on feed for 63 days and were consuming 25 pounds of feed per head per day with total feed costs running at \$1.57 per head per day. Yardage and miscellaneous charges are 6 cents per head per day. The current total costs are running at \$1.63 per head per day, with a 63-day total cost of \$1.81 per head per day.

The interim sorts and projected market dates should be arriving soon, based on the second individual body weight and back fat measurements. Keeping track of individual costs of gain and steer performance is critical in determining when an individual steer should be marketed to maximize dollar return per animal.

The feedlot is performing according to expectation, and that brings us to

preparation for the 2002 calf crop--the availability of sires for the current breeding season. The bull sales are well underway, and anyone who can't find a bull just hasn't looked. A quick review of the ads in one regional publication showed 4,023 bulls listed from 50 producers. In addition, there were 27 classified ads that didn't list the number of bulls. The breeds listed included Angus, Charolais, Red Angus, South Devon, Gelbvieh, Saler, Simmental, Limousin, Maine Anjou, Polled Hereford, Shorthorn and Horned Hereford.

The average producer had approximately 70 bulls for sale with the range being two bulls to 500 bulls. Based on the current cow inventory from the North Dakota Agricultural Statistics 2000, there should be 940,000 cows awaiting 55,000 bulls this spring. Assuming 30 cows per bull, only 31,333 bull will actually be needed.

Have fun shooting the bull. May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.COM on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0029.

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Feedlot Arrival Report

Calves from NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center

	Arrival Weight (lbs)	Back Fat (inches)	Hip Height (inches)
Average	693	0.11	46.0
Maximum	928	0.25	50.5
Minimum	466	0.04	41.0
Range	462	0.21	9.5

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