

May 24, 2001



NDSU Extension Service

## **BeefTalk: The World's Best Beef Is Made in the Northern Great Plains**

**By Kris Ringwall, Extension Beef Specialist,**

The weeks keep moving on. The calves are growing. The cows are synchronized. The bulls are turned out. The purchased semen has been used. And cows are grazing on the cool season grasses.

Last week was a busy week. The replacement heifers received the final shot of prostaglandin on May 12, the final step in our breeding synchronization program. The heifers started cycling the next day, and they were artificially bred throughout the first part of the week. The majority of the cows received the final prostaglandin injection on May 18. The cows started cycling on the 20th and were all bred on the 21st. Some of the cows were synchronized and bred naturally, but the majority were time bred through artificial breeding. Now we play the waiting game. The cow is busy

raising this year's calf and hopefully carrying next year's calf.

As producers, the cycle continues, but as managers, how do we know what we are doing is right? As is often the case, these discussions occur frequently and generally without much action. Another marketing year is already here. It is best to formulate those plans now, if you have not already done so.

When I was down in Bowman last week and picked up nine Hereford yearling bulls, I had the opportunity to visit with State Senator Bill Bowman concerning value added agriculture. No matter which activity is discussed, beef producers are faced year in and year out with some common concerns.

Enhanced value starts at the ranch with good herd health programs, solid record keeping and permanent lifetime identification.

- How many producers today identify calves with the intention of the ID number being with that calf for its entire life?
- How many producers effectively record the needed data that documents the performance and profitability of that calf?
- How many producers can recall, effectively, every product administered to each calf?

The documentation starts at the ranch. Once those three basic principles are adhered to, and only then, can each producer start the value added chain. Tracking cattle performance by retained ownership or data retention programs can return information back to the producer for subsequent evaluation. The system is extensive. The producer, feeder, packer, retailer and consumer all impact the beef cattle chain. It is a consortium, if you will,

and all are important links.

Spring is here and with it comes the eternal optimism of new growth. The seed is planted and, yes, opportunity for a bumper crop still remains. So does the opportunity to add value to this year's calf crop. Dream a little and do your part to offer to the market 100,000 Northern Great Plains calves that are not just ordinary calves. Rather, offer a package of genetic calves that were tagged at birth, fed on mom's milk and mixed grass prairies, and have received no antibiotics, hormones or stimulants other than the pollen of native flowers, grass and sedges. Implement a health program that has been vigorously followed. Develop preconditioning and feedlot rations that smell of fresh steam flaked corn and the aroma of sweet ensiled haylage as fresh as the country meadow that produced it.

No, this is not a dream. These are the calves that are produced in the Northern Great Plains every year. Why do we sell them into a commodity based marketing system to have their identity forever lost? As producers of beef, we don't need to stand up and be counted, we simply need to have faith in the product we raise. Let's corral those 100,000 head, insist that our peers and fellow producers document what they do, and market them as the top quality beef we know we produce.

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 North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.COM](http://www.CHAPS2000.COM) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0040.

###

**Source:** Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2045, [kringwal@ndsuent.nodak.edu](mailto:kringwal@ndsuent.nodak.edu)  
**Editor:** Tom Jirik, (701) 231-9629, [tjirik@ndsuent.nodak.edu](mailto:tjirik@ndsuent.nodak.edu)

**Initial steps for a complete producer to consumer value added beef program**

**PRODUCER**

- Document herd health
- Maintain continuous genetic and quality improvements
- Individualized ID tracking system -- ranch through processing
- Retain ownership or data retention through final sale of products
- Individual animal performance and carcass data returned to the producer

**FEEDLOT**

- Ranch coordinated health program
- Eliminate unnecessary feed additives
- Produce a consistent end product
- Ultrasound to determine optimum endpoint
- Individual animal performance and carcass data returned to the producer

[Click here for a printable PDF version of this graphic.](#) (6KB b&w graph)  
[Click here for a printable EPS version of this graphic.](#) (76KB b&w graph)

[Click here for a EPS file of the BeefTalk logo suitable for printing.](#)  
(100KB b&w logo)