

## Data Analysis Is Important Part of Calf Finishing Phase

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The last of the preconditioned steer calves should be settled in the feedlot by now. The calves were originally to be shipped on Dec. 20, however, weather delayed shipping until the next day.

I'm sure the feed yard was less than happy to get the calves the day before Christmas eve, but good shipping dates and good weather don't always agree. (One thing I have learned: When the trucker--in this case Ed--doesn't want to go, you don't go. Conversely, when the trucker wants to go, you go. End of discussion.) The next issue is data analysis. The shipment of calves to the feedlot starts the data flow. My experience indicates that cow and calf data is generally lacking throughout the industry, but as soon as the calves hit the feedlot, data sheets are available by the notebook full.

The 2002 Cow Herd Appraisal and Performance Software (CHAPS) program report for North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center steer calves is 12 pages long. The report lists the performance of each steer from birth to weaning as well as average performance for the various steer groups, sires and cow breeds within the herd. The 12 pages include data from February to November.

Within 24 hours of arrival at the feedlot, each pen of steer calves generated a report that was 6 pages long. Every two weeks subsequent reports will be delivered, along with interim reports on performance followed by a final carcass data report. In the end, the portfolio on the center's calves will be more than an inch thick. This is solid, important data but within the industry, much of this data falls through the cracks and is never used for the overall improvement of the herd or management.

Electronic data we receive can arrive at a greater rate than the our ability to comprehend it. The best use of data is to extract what you can from the current data quickly, assure or adjust management needs and get on with business.

The initial receiving reports confirm the arrival of the cattle and the initial cattle type. The initial set of calves,

86 steer calves, were received in the feedlot on Nov. 1, after 42 days of preconditioning. These were the early weaned calves. All the remaining steers were weaned at the traditional early November time period, preconditioned for 42 days, and shipped.

The first load of calves arrived at the feedlot weighing an average of 562 pounds, with an average back fat of .08 inches and an average height of 44.6 inches at the hip. The last two loads of 123 steers arrived at the yard weighing an average of 689 pounds, with an average of .16 inches of back fat and an average height of 47 inches.

There is not much more I can do with the data at this time, other than to enter it into CHAPS and start preparing for the summary report. The interim reports should be arriving in January, and the two lots gaining additional data in February. The data shows both these lots of calves were very variable. The first load ranged from 415 pounds to 697 pounds and .02 inches of back fat all the way to .21 inches of back fat. The second load ranged from 436 pounds to 882 pounds and .05 inches of back fat all the way to .32 inches of back fat.

Obviously these load spreads are great and obviously the cattle need to be sorted. The interim report will sort the calves into similar groups and targeted marketing periods. Using conservative gain numbers, both groups should be averaging over 750 pounds by mid January, with anticipated market weights of 1,200 pounds in late April and early May for the majority of the calves.

Stay tuned for performance and profit opportunities. 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 BT0125.

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# Feedlot Receiving Reports for 2002 Steer Calves

<b>Group</b>	<b>Number of Calves</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Back Fat</b>	<b>Hip Height</b>
Pen 1 average	86	562 lbs	.08 in	44.6 in
Pen 1 range		282 lbs	.19 in	15.3 in
Pen 2 average	123	689 lbs	.16 in	47.0 in
Pen 2 range		446 lbs	.27 in	14.3 in

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