

Net Calf Value Return Exceeds \$750 Record

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Finally something to write home about! Lot 3518 closed out with excellent results. The calves brought home the pay dirt with an average back to the ranch value of \$754. The calves were valued into the feed yard at \$638 per head, but drew a net return of \$116 additional dollars per head.

Lot 3518 consisted of 129 steers, so added to the income side of the ledger was a check for \$97,266. Cow-calf expenses still need to be deducted, but, even without the additional paper work, the value is a record value for the Dickinson Research Extension Center.

The Center has retained ownership of all calves produced since the mid 1990s. Although we have experienced positive numbers across the years, lot 3518 will be the standard bearer for the future, printed in strong, bold, black ink.

The lot wasn't anything special, just good cattle with no death loss. One calf was sold early because it was a poor performer. All but seven of the remaining calves were harvested when they met the maximum allowable back fat of four-tenths inches. The remaining calves left the lot due to weight or cost of gain.

Out of Lot 3518, 36.7 percent graded choice, 61.7 percent graded select and 1.6 percent were no rolled, certainly not a super star performance for quality grade. Yield grades were 3.1 percent yield grade one, 45.3 percent yield grade two and 51.6 percent yield grade three. There were no discounts for yield grades four and five.

A big value driver in bottom-line finishing was the hot carcass weight: 20.3 percent ranged from 550 to 649 pounds, 71.1 percent ranged from 650 to 850 pounds and 8.6 percent ranged from 851 to 950 pounds. The hot carcass weights at least approached the mid point of 750 pounds.

Feed efficiency for the lot was another positive for the Center. The calves consumed 5.21 pounds of dry feed per pound of gain. The calves converted feed to muscle well, helping to keep costs down and helping offset the lower quality grade.

Another plus for the lot was the rib eye area. The lot averaged 12.55 square inches. The USDA required rib eye for this lot was 12.46. From the Center's perspective, this is the first lot that has actually exceeded rib eye requirements. Muscle sells, and this lot not only converted feed to muscle well, but added extra muscle on the rail. Another notable characteristic was the average daily gain of 3.68 pounds per day during the 125 days on feed.

The calves arrived at the feed yard on Dec. 30 at 693 pounds off the truck and averaged 1177 pounds at harvest. The average harvest date was May 6.

Putting the data together into a meaningful report that can help with managerial changes requires effort. When the bottom line dollars are scarce, the task is somewhat laborious. However, lot 3518 produced a smile as the numbers were scanned and the efforts, from conception to harvest, were rewarded.

This is not always the case for producers involved in retained ownership. Reality many times does not allow back-to-back wins, but this year was the exception. Even the poorest of the Center's lots made a positive dollar value this year. Lot 3300 averaged a net return of \$32.13.

The actual market price will always drive the bottom line. Good calf prices compounded by excellent harvest prices for finished cattle brought dollars into the operation during the past feeding season.

Right now there is excitement as weaning thoughts are being put to paper and truckers lined up for another year. Next year's market predictions are being primed.

May you find all your USAIP 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 BT0208.

A Positive Equation in the Beef Business

Value of the 2003 fall calf	\$638
Additional value on the rail	+ \$116
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Total calf value	\$754