

## Bellowing Calves Lose \$2 to \$3 in Value Daily

By Kris Ringwall  
Extension Beef Specialist  
NDSU Extension Service



One of the most challenging times in a beef cattle operation is proper management of calves at weaning. The correct approach can mean substantial dollars for producers.

At today's prices, calves have the potential to gain \$2 to \$3 per day in value. The gain in value, however, is often lost because calves are literally standing still until the sorting, hauling and penning all occurs. Even after the final penning, the calves need to adapt to new bunks and feed rations, adding additional stress to the calves.

How much value is lost at weaning? CHAPS data shows North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association calves on pasture have an average daily gain (ADG) of 2.3 pounds. If the process is started on Monday, it is not unusual to still be making the final penning on Friday. For calves gaining 2.3 pounds per day, that amounts to 11.5 pounds of lost gain during the week.

Data shows these same steer calves have come off the cow at 559 pounds. The local Stockmen's Livestock Exchange representative sales on Sept. 16 showed 560 steers selling for \$125.33 per hundredweight, more than \$700 per head. One needs to repeat that number, more than \$700 per head for average weight on fall-weaned calves. (A side note: Times have changed, and dollars are available in the beef business.)

Getting no gain off a weaned calf for five days costs money; 2.3 pounds of gain per day at \$1.25 per pound is \$2.88 per day, or \$14.38 for five days. Any day a calf is not gaining weight adds to the expense side of the equation with nothing on the income side.

Calves need to have nutritionally balanced rations and an ample supply of fresh water at weaning. The cattle industry has many nutritional consultants to make sure an adequate ration is placed in front of newly weaned calves to keep those calves gaining.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, calves

are fed chopped grass hay during weaning and slowly brought up to a complete ration. Animal scientist Doug Landblom has evaluated several ration combinations. The results of these studies can be found on the center's Web site at [www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/dickins/](http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/dickins/).

Here is a quick overview of two diets. The corn/soybean meal ration was 77.8 percent corn, 15.6 percent soybean meal, 5 percent molasses, 0.85 percent limestone, 0.1 percent dical, 0.5 percent salt, a trace mineral premix, vitamin A and D and decoquinat. This ration has been fed for the last three years and the calves had an ADG of 2.54 pounds with a feed efficiency of 7.02 pounds of feed per pound of gain when fed for 38-plus days.

Another ration that performed similarly, but is more of a fiber-based co-product ration is 10 percent corn, 20 percent peas, 37.1 percent soyhulls, 16.9 percent wheat midds, 10 percent barley malt sprouts, 5 percent molasses, 0.3 percent limestone, 0.1 percent dical, 0.5 percent salt, a trace mineral premix, vitamin A and D and decoquinat. This ration was compared to the high-starch or corn-based ration. The calves averaged 2.57 pounds of average daily gain with a feed efficiency of 7.32 pounds of feed per pound of gain over the same feeding period.

There are lots of combinations that will get calves off to a good start. Don't wait; consult your nutritionist and have the ration ready before the calves come home.

May you find all your USAIP 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 BT0214.

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## Potential Per Day Lost Value for Bellowing Calves

<b>Projected calf average daily gain lost</b>	<b>Current value per pound of 560 weight steers</b>	<b>Total lost daily value</b>
2.0 pounds	\$1.25	\$2.50
2.5 pounds	\$1.25	\$3.12
3.0 pounds	\$1.25	\$3.75