

More Power, More Pounds; Six Minutes Could Save a Life

By Kris Ringwall
Extension Beef Specialist
NDSU Extension Service



More power, more pounds.

It's an appropriate quotation for beef production as the industry seeks ways to grow more beef using better sires. The net result is an explosion of output. However, the reality of the statement is quite different than what it sounds.

More power, more pounds is a reference to the current state of affairs of hauling livestock. The power comes encapsulated in the form of heavy-duty pulling rigs, just like the television commercials show.

Currently the Dickinson Research Extension Center uses a Ford F-350 1 ton equipped with a 7.3-liter diesel engine and a year newer Ford F-450 1.5 ton equipped with a newer 6-liter diesel engine. Both rigs, plus other pickups in the system, pull with power and serve to move cattle and get the job done.

The pounds come from the load. The center pulls using a 22- or 24-foot-long, 7-foot-wide gooseneck trailer capable of pulling up to 7,000 pounds per axle. In the newer lineups of trailers, trailer axles can be rated to pull up to 8,000 pounds per axle if one were to go shopping for larger trailers. The center recently loaded a 36-foot-long, 7.5-foot-wide triple-axle trailer rated at 8,000 pounds per axle capable of hauling 24,000 pounds.

In terms of calves, the Center can haul up to 28 calves weighing 500 pounds each or 25 calves weighing 550 pounds each. The larger trailer was recently used to haul 40 newly weaned calves to Hettinger.

The ability to move cattle has certainly changed. There are challenges and difficulties with any change. Often, the thought of off-road vehicle commercials comes to mind. They skillfully dart up steep terrain and stop with great precision just prior to falling into a bottomless ravine. The driver gently sighs, views the setting sun across the endless landscape, smiles, shoves the rig into reverse, turns around and drives into the vastness of the extensive frontier.

Unfortunately, some of the drivers I have met have seen too many commercials and adventure movies. Knock, knock, it's time for a reality check. Safety must always come first. When speed is added to the equation of power

and pounds, that reality check becomes very real. To add salt to the wound, most of the cross-country terrain is very real and the many miles of gravel roads add to the disasters waiting to happen scenario.

The speed limit, at least for North Dakota gravel roads, is 55 mph unless otherwise posted. A quick review of the owner's manual for the trailers notes the maximum recommended speed is 60 mph even in the best of road conditions. In all cases, there is a notation that reads depending on road conditions.

An unscientific, quick check of local roads shows most are eight solid paces or about 24 feet from edge to edge of the well-defined maintained road. The more typical gravel road struggles to maintain seven paces or 21 feet of non-grassed roadway. The same roadway is only 5 paces, or 15 feet across the typical wheel tracks. A 15-foot clearance for two 7.5-foot-wide trailers, each going the speed limit of 55 mph, is not enough.

Speed limits are always dependent on conditions. The typical rural gravel road does not support the newer hauling units even at the speed limit. Slow down. Driving the best rig in town, pulling 20,000 pounds of weight, is serious business and speed has no place in the equation.

For the center, a typical haul is about 15 miles. If driven on a gravel road, at the speed limit, the haul should take just under 17 minutes. If the speed is reduced to 40 mph, the drive should take just under 23 minutes, a difference of six minutes.

Take the six minutes and enjoy the drive. I thought that is why we choose to live out here.

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 BT0217.



Time Savings Versus Safety Slow Down When Hauling Cattle

Time to travel 15 miles at 40 mph	23 minutes
Time to travel 15 miles at 55 mph	17 minutes
Time Savings	<u>6 minutes</u>

Six minutes could save a life.