



# BeefTalk: Understanding Data Takes Time, Focus and Dedication

**It takes data and, with the evaluation and understanding of that data, producers can implement managerial change that brings with it good net returns.**

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On June 26, the Dickinson Research Extension Center received the final data sheet on its 2007 steers. The closeout ranked net return and noted the top 20 percent, middle 60 percent and bottom 20 percent.

The steers had an average net return of \$33.82. The top 20 percent returned \$107 per head, the middle 60 percent returned \$35 per head and the bottom 20 percent lost \$43 per head.

As with most data sheets, one easily can scan the data and subsequently get lost in the numbers. Tough questions should be asked and seeds for improvement harvested.

The closeout sheet graphed four traits: quality grade distribution, yield grade distribution, hot carcass weight distribution and rib eye area distribution. These graphs provided a place to start.

Of the top 11 steers, nine were choice and two were select carcasses, with an average yield grade of 2.18 and average hot carcass weight of 821 pounds. These steers had 0.9 additional square inch of rib eye area (14.5 versus the required 13.6 for that size carcass).

Of the middle 33 steers, 12 ended up choice and 21 were select carcasses, with an average yield grade of 2.42 and average hot carcass weight of 790 pounds. They had 0.1 square inch of rib eye area less than needed (13.2 versus the required 13.3 for that size carcass).

One can see a trend simply by comparing these values. The top-returning steers had a greater percentage of choice carcasses, more desirable yield grades and more red meat to sell on the rail as determined by hot carcass weight and rib eye area.

The bottom 11 steers ended up with two choice, seven select and two no-roll carcasses. The steers had an average yield grade of 2.33 and average hot carcass weight of 796 pounds. These steers had 0.2 square inch of rib eye area less than needed (13.2 versus the required 13.4 for that size carcass).

Generally, the lower-end carcass averages tell the same story as comparing the middle-valued carcasses with those carcasses of greater value. Speckled within the lower-valued carcasses were carcasses, such as the no rolls or some very lightly muscled cattle or calves with increased treatment costs, that pulled the group average down.

For instance, the average value (carcass price per hundredweight, or cwt) was \$145.09. The two no-roll carcasses brought \$135.47 and \$132.05 per cwt. Health costs also were a factor. Four calves in the low-return groups had health costs of \$43.13, \$14.61, \$14.12 and \$52.76 compared with the lot average treatment costs of \$3.02.

Feed efficiency also provided some answers. The low-return steers converted dry matter at 5.34 pounds and gained 3.76 pounds per day.

Images

Feedlot Net Returns	
55 Dickinson Research Extension Center Steers	
Average Lot Net Return .....	\$33.82
Lower 20% .....	\$-43.00
Middle 60% .....	\$35.00
Higher 20% .....	\$107.00

Feedlot Net Returns

The middle-return steers converted at 4.56 pounds and gained 4.4 pounds per day. The high-return calves converted at 4.43 pounds of dry matter per pound of gain and gained 4.58 pounds per day, all trends and gradual at best.

One can see how easy it is to get lost in data. However, if one sits back and thinks for a bit and incorporates the various pieces of information into one's thoughts, the higher- valued cattle were steers that gained well, had zero treatment costs and converted feed to pounds of meat.

The genetic package that could produce red meat that was predicted to have a better eating quality with a minimal amount of fat and a larger than required rib eye muscle was worth more. The challenge remains to develop genetic and management packages at the ranch that help guide the industry to the upper end of value and net return on the rail.

It takes data and, with the evaluation and understanding of that data, producers can implement managerial change that brings with it good net returns. However, it takes time, focus and dedication.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Attachments



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