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## BeefTalk: There is No Profit from Calves that Cost \$2.80 Per Pound

### Is the return for the added performance of the calves worthwhile?

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

"The pass is open" is an expression that is used by residents and travelers in mountainous areas. This year, the saying, "the interstate is open" would ring a bell, especially given all the changes in travel agendas in the past three to four months.

A more relevant outburst, "the yard is open," can be heard muffled in the sound of water starting to flow. That call means some of the outbuildings can be accessed and the start of a more normal routine is evident.

A normalcy is needed because calving is or soon will be the routine of choice. Cattle producers know the demands of calving and the need for good, clean space.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center started calving with mixed results. The weather has not been horrendous and the first-calf heifers are up close.

The first calf born, however, was dead. The feeling of seeing the desire and efforts of a cow that wants to be a mother and is licking and nudging her dead calf is not good.

We simply don't know what went wrong. One cannot be present for every birth.

The second heifer was calving and having difficulty, so life moves on. The birth was assisted, but she ended up with a 96-pound calf. However, the heifer was belligerent and

## Images

**PROFIT?**

"There is no profit in a calf that costs \$2.80 per pound to deliver by caesarean section and has no heartbeat."

There is no profit in a calf that costs \$2.80 per pound to deliver by caesarean section and has no heartbeat.

## columns

### [Dairy Focus: Dairy Focus: Economic Conditions Could Get Ugly](#) (2009-02-05)

The economy likely will get worse before it gets better for dairy producers. [FULL STORY](#)

### [Biofuel Economics: New Energy Economics: Visit Our New Wind Energy Web Site](#) (2009-02-26)

The Web site is up 24/7, so people can access the information at their convenience. [FULL STORY](#)

### [BeefTalk: BeefTalk: There is No Profit from Calves that Cost \\$2.80 Per Pound](#) (2009-03-05)

Is the return for the added performance of the calves worthwhile? [FULL STORY](#)

### [Hortiscope: Hortiscope](#) (2009-03-04)

Ron Smith answers questions about plants, trees and gardens. [FULL STORY](#)

### [Livestock Market Advisor: Market Advisor: U.S. Sheep and Lamb Inventories Decline](#) (2009-02-12)

Current prices are being impacted by the economic meltdown and less demand for all meat, including lamb. [FULL STORY](#)

### [Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Shape Up for Spring with Exergames](#) (2009-03-04)

Soon I was standing on the Wii balance board being weighed and having my balance and strength tested. [FULL STORY](#)

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ornery.

Her intent on inflicting damage to us or the calf was obvious, so out of the pen she went. She will spend her remaining days with us in the feedlot, but with us out of her reach.

Fortunately, heifer 7037 was still looking for a calf and adopted the calf with no questions asked. Sometimes things actually do work out.

The center has tried to keep birth weights low and calving ease high when selecting bulls for heifers. This year's sire of the calves was listed in the top 15 percent of the breed for calving ease and the top 45 percent of the breed for birth weight (the smaller birth weight expected progeny differences (EPD), the better).

The bull was a high-growth bull that is in the upper 15 percent of the breed for weaning weight, upper 10 percent for yearling weight and has very good carcass EPD values. The bull is a good bull, but is he a heifer bull?

One can listen to the usual hemming and hawing, but for us, the bottom line is this bull is not a heifer bull. One is always a little on edge with high-growth bulls bred to heifers.

In this case, the four calves that had difficult pulls or cesarean sections have averaged 84.5 pounds. Out of 26 heifers, we have lost three calves and assisted five births (one light assist).

Of the dead calves, two were born dead and the third was a cesarean section. Of the four difficult assisted births (other than the cesarean section), they are doing fine, but had big calves.

The four calves that needed assistance averaged 98 pounds and ranged from 92 to 118 pounds. Of the 21 heifers that had no birthing problems, their calves averaged 82 pounds at birth and are doing fine.

Although hard to document, when a set of calving heifers are slow to recoup after calving and the calves are cumbersome at best, you should know you are pushing the envelope. We pushed the limits and created a manageable, but difficult situation.

Is the return for the added performance of the calves worthwhile? We will wait and see, but I can tell you it costs \$2.80 a pound to produce a calf through caesarean section.

There is no profit from calves that cost \$2.80


per pound and have no heartbeat.

With that, it is time to ponder next year's breeding bulls and wait for the pheasant wattles to turn red. Spring is coming and, yes, "the yard is open!"

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



[PDF - There is no profit in a calf that costs \\$2.80 per pound to deliver by caesarean section and has no heartbeat.](#)



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[EPS - There is no profit in a calf that costs \\$2.80 per pound to deliver by caesarean section and has no heartbeat.](#)

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