

you are here: [home](#) → [columns](#) → [beefTalk](#) → [beefTalk: tag calves for maximum marketing opportunities](#)

navigation

Links

- [News Home](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Archives](#)

Feeds

- All News [RSS](#)
- BeefTalk [RSS](#)
- Dairy Focus [RSS](#)
- Prairie Fare [RSS](#)
- Economics [RSS](#)
- Renewable Accounts [RSS](#)
- Small-business Savvy [RSS](#)

Twitter

- On Twitter follow [NDSU Ag News](#)

BeefTalk: Tag Calves for Maximum Marketing Opportunities



No producer should be shut out of competitive bidding simply because the calves are not identified adequately.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Summer is here, and soon this year's calves will leave home.

Astute cow-calf sellers know now is the time to maximize the number of marketing programs for their calves. This is not too early to be checking marketing outlets to see how the calves should be identified so every sales opportunity can be realized, which pays out value that, in the end, increases net

Images



Now is the Time to Get the Calf ID Numbers Right

nd state fair



[4-H State Fair Results](#)

columns

[Spotlight on Economics: Spotlight on Economics: Just Hang Up](#) (2016-07-13)

Studies have found that drivers tend to downplay the risk of their own phone use.

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[BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Tag Calves for Maximum Marketing Opportunities](#)

(2016-07-14) No producer should be shut out of competitive bidding simply because the calves are not identified adequately.

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[Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: 10 Tips to Eat More Vegetables](#) (2016-07-14)

Veggies provide fiber, fluid, vitamins and minerals and can help protect against some

profit.

Historically, if an operation has not changed nor modified the basic fundamental beef production, management and marketing plan, ask “why not?” Beef enterprises always must seek to expand calf marketing, and now is the time to be aggressive.

Producers often think competitive marketing means searching various sales organizations and selecting a site or method for their calf crop. That is only part of the question because each site or method has competing sale opportunities and associated programs that need calves. The key to marketing is to know the programs within your marketing outlet.

Let me repeat: Astute sellers make sure to maximize the number of programs for which their calves qualify.

To access the maximum programs, buyers need an identification system that assures downstream purchasers that they are receiving the right calves. So properly identify all calves prior to leaving the ranch of origin. All calves should be aged with a traceable source according to the requirements of the selected marketing programs.

Additionally, numbers of individual calves need to be correct and match the marketing and shipping manifests that indicate which calves went where. The new owner will need to verify that the numbers are correct prior to the final harvest.

diseases. [FULL STORY](#)

[Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: Customer Shopping Assistance](#) (2016-07-07) Pay attention to your customers’ words and body language. [FULL STORY](#)

use of releases

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It's all in animal identification that connects premium management to the consumer - without error. And did I use the word "it?" "It" draws meaning from the words used. Starting a conversation with the word "it" can be rather nebulous or vague, but animal identification and the word "it" have a lot in common because animal identification often is defined by the producer of the calves.

Failure to adequately identify cattle moving through the marketing process can derail animal identification programs. Animal ID is a broad and often vague process that derives "its" meaning from the person or people who applied the ID in the first place.

Let's visit production-applied animal ID. An animal ID may be as simple as a blank colored tag or as complicated as several digits embedded on the tag. Sometimes, owner, sire, dam, location or several other codes are placed on the tag.

The physical form of the tag, as well as the shape, can vary. Some tags may attach closely to the animal; others may dangle. Some tags may attach to the ear, or be glued to the hair, draped from a neck chain, or attached to the brisket or even the leg. In some cases, the ear simply may be overtagged and have no room for an additional animal ID tag.

Animal ID can be a tattoo in the ear, on the skin or

other readable surfaces. And, if the outside seems too obvious, then the animal ID can be implanted under the skin or placed in a bolus for insertion into the rumen if cattle or similar animals are being identified, or simply applied directly to the hide as a hot brand or freeze brand.

Tags can be read visually or by electronic scanners. The scanners can have multiple frequencies, powered by several energy sources and transmitted over variable distances. As time moves on, even flying drones may scan and read tags, some of which are permanent, some temporary.

Tags can be placed at birth, weaning, marketing time or anytime the animal is restrained enough to attach the tag or other animal ID successfully.

If one includes the various markings with paint sticks and other markers, animal identification gets interesting. So "it" applies in animal identification. But the point, as the marketing season approaches, is that producers need to verify that their calves' IDs will meet the needs of the market. No producer should have a door shut on the competitive bidding simply because the calves are not adequately identified.

Attitude, often categorized as good or bad, is always present during the ID discussion and, thus, the tendency is to prolong discussions that otherwise could be brief. Perhaps not the actual

animal identification process, but the paperwork and accountability that is implied by the identification process challenge the workings of a beef producer's office.

For most calves, conception to the final harvest often will stretch into the third year and the life of cows can stretch for two decades. That may be a long time to keep records, plus ownership changes occur, further complicating the process. But still, priority No. 1 means producers should adapt and implement an animal identification system that will allow the producers' calves to travel around the world.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact your local NDSU Extension Service agent (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/directory>) or Ringwall at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; 701-456-1103; or [✉kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu).

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Attachments



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[ID Numbers Right](#) 

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