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BeefTalk: Frame Score 3 May Calves Put 1,400 pounds of Beef on the Rail

Smaller calves are marketable and acceptable.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Size discussions are vital within the beef industry because the challenge of surviving is real.

Often, those discussions would imply that an absolute answer exists and making the wrong choice would be the demise of the producer's cattle operation. Wrong.

Granted, traditional production of middle-of-the-road cattle and associated marketing paths are the comfortable travel routes for producers. This always has been true. However, producers realize very quickly that keeping a moderate-sized cow is

Images

May-born Calves 22 Months Later		
NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center, 2011-13		
	Frame Score 3 to 4	Frame Score 5 to 6
Pounds at harvest	1,401	1,610
Carcass value on the rail	\$2,018	\$2,243

May-born Calves, 22 Months Later

columns

2016 4-H State Fair Results: 4-H'ers Awarded for State Fair Static Exhibits (2016-08-08) Youth receive recognition for their exhibits in a number of categories. [FULL STORY](#)

Spotlight on Economics: Spotlight on Economics: Further Declines in N.D. Cropland Values Likely (2016-08-23) A further decline in North Dakota cropland values will occur for the 2016 year. Will land values decline in 2017? Probably, although markets can change abruptly. [FULL STORY](#)

BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Frame Score 3 May Calves Put 1,400 pounds of Beef on the Rail (2016-08-25) Smaller calves are marketable and acceptable. [FULL STORY](#)

Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Exploring Nutrition Along the Lewis and Clark Trail (2016-08-25) Corn and squash helped sustain Lewis and Clark during their

not simple, and without appropriate selection, cattle size will stray.

But what happens when the path becomes set? Do you have options to choose a different path? The choice gets very complicated, often wrapped up in considerable rhetoric, making a change of one's path difficult.

Change is something beef producers always need to anticipate. Simply moving forward, regardless of the current excellence of a program, eventually will lead to a dead end.

The prairies are crisscrossed with trails. A few of the trails became roads, and some of those roads became highways and some become interstates. And, finally, an airport arrives, and one simply may fly over the prairies.

Things change. There is no right or wrong in deciding when and how to adjust to change because paths, even old trails, can be filled. Again, one of those trails in the beef industry is how different cow sizes fit in the industry.

Before beginning the discussion, however, let's evaluate the product of small cows, as previously we have discussed the larger-framed cattle. Remember, every path must lead to a marketable product that has demand. Ultimately, producers will, and should, produce what fits their operation and environment, but long-term success will be achieved only if the product is marketable and

helped sustain Lewis and Clark during their winter in North Dakota. [FULL STORY](#)

[Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: Identify Yourself as a Small-business Owner](#) (2016-08-18)

Small-business ownership is an attitude and an identity. [FULL STORY](#)

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profitable.

Several years ago, the Dickinson Research Extension Center cow herd was split into the range herd (smaller cows) and the beef herd (larger cows). The two herds differ in size by about 300 pounds in mature weight and two frame scores.

Frame score is defined by the Beef Improvement Federation as follows: "Hip height converted to frame score is a linear measurement that helps cattle producers evaluate lean-to-fat ratio potential of an individual animal in a performance program. No one frame size will be best for all feed resources, breeding systems and markets."

The federation adds: "Large-framed animals tend to be heavier at all weights, leaner and later maturing. Small-framed animals tend to be lighter, fatter and earlier maturing. Frame scores can be monitored to maintain body size, fatness level and maturing rate within the optimum ranges dictated by the resources, breeding system and market specifications of a herd. Frame score is a convenient way of describing the skeletal size of cattle."

In 2011, 2012 and 2013, center-born steer calves from the range herd had an average frame score of 3.8. The beef herd steers had an average frame score of 5.5. So back to the original question. We know how frame score 5 and 6 calves (44.1 to

46.1 inches at the hip at 7 months of age) perform, and they help make our path comfortable.

But what about frame score 3 and 4 calves (40 to 42.1 inches at the hip at 7 months of age)? Are they a product that is marketable? The answer is yes. The center's small-frame steers grew into an average of 1,401 pounds when harvested at around 22 months of age, with a carcass value on the rail of \$2,018. That is a lot of calf and certainly excellent value.

The frame score 5 and 6 steers grew into an average of 1,610 pounds when harvested at around 22 months of age, with a carcass value on the rail of \$2,243.

Data collected by center scientists Songul Şenturklu and Doug Landblom show the larger-frame-score steer calves' fall weaning weight was 567. The calves had an average daily winter gain of 1.3 pounds and were turned out as yearlings in early May at 780 pounds.

They came off summer grass in mid-August at 1,047 pounds and subsequently grazed a field of pea-barley intercrop followed by unharvested corn. The steers weighed 1,230 pounds by late fall. At that time, they were sent to the feedlot for 82 days.

The frame score 3 and 4 steer calves weaned off at 453 pounds and overwintered with an average daily gain of 1.4 pounds. They turned out to grass

in early May as yearlings weighing 674 pounds and came off summer grass in mid-August at 909 pounds.

They subsequently grazed a field of pea-barley intercrop followed by unharvested corn. The steers weighed 1,086 pounds by late fall. At that time, they also were sent to the feedlot for 82 days.

The question is answered! Yes, smaller calves are marketable and acceptable. The real question: Which calf was the most profitable? Stay tuned for the answer. You may be surprised.

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.

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Attachments



[PDF - May-born Calves, 22 Months](#)

Later 

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