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## BeefTalk: Selling Calves is More Than Hauling Them to Town



**Selling involves offering a superior product and marketing aggressively.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Today's calves have a reputation that is earned and recorded.

The producer may or may not be heavily involved, but the calf buyers are very involved.

Buyers know most cattle and have kept track of previous years' performance. For the most part, the performance history of each load of calves is noted and calls go out to get more calves like those.

### Images

#### Six Steps to Placing Premium Calves on the Market

1. Superior Genetics
2. Sound Management
3. Preconditioning
4. Tag Identification
5. Certification
6. Marketing Strategy

Six Steps to Placing Premium Calves on the Market

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**[Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: What's Your Small-business Money Maker?](#)** (2016-09-01)

Knowing which one of your products or services is keeping the doors open is

Are your calves on the call list and engaged in active participation in regard to buyers? If not, now is the time to get on the list. Here are six steps to raising calves that are in demand:

- Offer superior genetics
- Provide sound management
- Implement a preconditioning program
- Implement calf identification
- Certify production practices for the targeted market
- Engage in a good marketing strategy

The order of the steps is not as important as doing the steps.

Superior genetics is a product of good sire selection. Calves are a product of a producer's genetic program. Gone are the days when one eyeballs and guesses what the genetic package holds.

The appropriate mix of growth and carcass genes achieved through proven sires is critical, and the calves will reflect their genetic input. Fast-growing calves that have the genes to grade choice and offer the feedlot some flexibility in marketing a high-lean, heavy carcass are desirable.

Sound management is an assurance calves are adaptable and ready to be moved physically and mentally. Buyers will pay extra dollars to get the

services is keeping the doors open is crucial. [FULL STORY](#)

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desired calves that have been under the care of a good manager who has adopted all the beef quality assurance principles.

Additionally, a good manager is someone who conducts business in a professional manner, pays attention to detail, has a broad grasp of the industry, has positive people skills, guides those who are supervised, and pays attention to detail through documentation and the sale of a program.

A preconditioning program seems like a no-brainer, but many calves still show up at the markets with no acclimation to the world. Preconditioned calves are products of a complete health management program designed to minimize risk as calves leave the home ranch, travel through the marketing channels and arrive at a backgrounder or feedlot. These calves must be accustomed to water troughs and feed bunks, timely vaccinated with recommended vaccines, treated for applicable parasites, and fully processed regarding castration and horns.

Calf identification has been a bony point, but calves need a connection to their source and some form of identification that allows for proper acknowledgment of the individual calf. All calves are different, and some do not measure up. Those that measure up need to be identified, even in a pen of similar-colored average calves.

Certification of calves may be new to some but old

hat to others. To obtain a premium, calves must be certified and acknowledged as to who they are as individuals.

As markets get more technical, this challenge becomes greater, but the difficulty does not remove the need to certify that the calf is what the producer claims. Call it the difference between generic and name-brand marketing; the difference is the name.

Finally, a good marketing strategy is paramount. Getting calves ready for market and capturing the available market dollars is the culmination of the total program. Perhaps the best advice still is to group a set of calves following proper preparation for the market and target the market with the appropriate set of calves.

Keep in touch with the local livestock market and do not be a stranger. Do the sorting at home, and keep the market groups crisp and sharp as they come closer to marketing day.

Granted, the thrill of seeing the whole calf crop loaded on the farm, unloaded at the sale barn and then acknowledged at sale time brings excitement to the day. But the more prudent approach of marketing selected groups of calves during a series of weeks or even months can complement specific markets and makes good sense.

The bottom line still remains: Calves will bring what the market needs, no more, no less.

Remember, present well-prepared calves ready for the market, and don't forget to contact last year's buyers and seek out a few extra buyers.

Marketing: It's how business survives. Do not give in to the mediocre. Progressive producers offer superior genetics, provide sound management, implement a preconditioning program, implement calf identification, certify production practices for a targeted market and engage in a good marketing strategy.

Aggressively market these calves. No one knows what you do unless you tell them. Tell the buyers, provide the facts and note the potential performance expectations of the calves you are about to sell. Brag a little and be proud. You can do it.

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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[Calves on the Market](#) 

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