

# BeefTalk: Market Cows and Bulls Rather Than Cull

**No herd should have any cull cows or bulls.**

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Fall is the time for breeding cattle inventory reconciliation.

Factors such as the availability of feed, labor and desire will be part of the review. The outcomes of this review really set the future for the cow-calf enterprise and the degree of managerial pressure through cattle numbers a producer places on the land resources available.

This is a big deal. Individual animals will be scrutinized critically and selected for next year's production herd. The decisions will set the future marketable production of the breeding herd but also will help capture maximum value for market cows and bulls. This an important facet of cow-calf operations, especially as inventories are adjusted to bring in younger cows.

The marketing of cows and bulls no longer needed in the herd (often called culling) is similar to the annual sale of calves and yearlings. Once completed, the producer and herd settle in for another production year.

If one reviews cattle history, the term "cull" should be dropped from cattle vocabulary. But first, let's take a closer look at market cows and bulls. I reviewed the executive summary of a publication titled the "National Beef 2016 Market Cow and Bull Quality Audit" that was published by the Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

The previous (2007) audit encouraged producers who "recognize and optimize cattle value, monitor health, market cattle in a timely and appropriate manner, prevent quality defects and are proactive to ensure beef safety and integrity." Within the industry, steps were taken to address the 2007 goals.

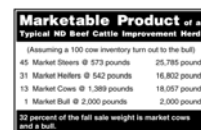
A review of the 2016 executive summary notes a successful outcome of the targeted goals for commercial beef producers when marketing cows and bulls. The implementation of the 2007 goals deserves a pat on the back because market cows and bulls are a significant part of a commercial cattle producer's marketable pounds.

How much? Let's look at the CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software) benchmarks from those producers involved with the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA). The CHAPS benchmark shows that for every 100 cows exposed to the bull, the producer would have 91 calves in the fall.

If the male-to-female ratio was 45 steers and 46 heifers, this producer would have approximately 25,785 pounds of steers (573 pounds per steer) to market and 24,932 pounds of heifers (542 pounds per heifer) available as potential replacements and/or to market at 193 days of age. The 15 replacement heifers (14.9 percent) would account for 8,130 pounds, leaving 16,802 pounds of market heifers.

Approximately 13.2 percent of the cow herd inventory also will be reduced, accounting for 18,057 pounds (1,389 average cow weight for 13 marketed cows). If a bull also is replaced, more than 2,000 pounds of

## Images



Marketable Product of a Typical ND Beef Cattle Improvement Herd	
45 Market Steers @ 573 pounds	25,785 pounds
31 Market Heifers @ 542 pounds	16,802 pounds
13 Market Cows @ 1,389 pounds	18,057 pounds
1 Market Bull @ 2,000 pounds	2,000 pounds
32 percent of the fall sale weight is market cows and a bull.	

Marketable Product of a Typical ND Beef Cattle Improvement Herd

market bull would be available for this assumed NDBCIA herd of 100 cows.

If a producer marketed calves at weaning, approximately 42,587 pounds of calf would be available to sell and 20,057 pounds of market cows and bull would be on the auction block. This is no small piece of change because 32 percent of the production weight is market cows and a bull.

So think positively. Market, not cull, animals.

Back to history: The word “cull” was probably an unfortunate term associated with fall herd reduction. A scan through some computer dictionaries or Webster’s Dictionary shows the definition of the word “cull” as rather offensive. Webster says that if we use the word “cull” as a noun, we are referring to “something rejected, especially as being inferior or worthless.” The word also can be used as an action verb meaning to “select from a group or to identify and remove the culls.”

When producers say they are culling, the statement is still true; however, the days of removing inferior and worthless animals should be historic, not current concepts of the process. More correctly, cattle removed today are market cattle, and the livestock markets actively sort and present excellent market cows and bulls. The culls, that is, those cattle that are so inferior as to be worthless, never should be marketed.

A managerial talking point certainly is created when nonmarketable cattle arrive in the sale pen. In terms of marketing alternatives, producers need to strive for zero tolerance by marketing all cattle in a timely manner. Holding some cattle through the grazing season when they should have been marketed the previous year is poor management with serious consequences.

When cattle arrive home from summer pasture, sort, resort and market bulls and cows without delay. The concept may seem simple, but understanding the roots of the process means changing a very deeply embedded concept that has been long established in the cattle industry. No herd should have any cull cows or bulls. Now go read the 2016 executive summary.

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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(NDSU\_Extension\_BeefTalk\_092018.pdf - 19.62 Kb)



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