

Discovering Value in North Dakota Calves; The Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout Project X (2010-11)

Karl Hoppe and Pat Carpentier

Learning more about the type of cattle we raise is the goal of North Dakota Cattle ranchers. The tenth year of the Dakota Feeder Calf show continues to explore the value of the calves by measuring feedlot performance and carcass characteristics. The Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout project was developed to discover the actual value of spring-born beef steer calves, provide comparisons between herds, and benchmark feeding and carcass performance. Cattle consigned to the feedout project averaged 615.9 pounds upon delivery to the Carrington Research Extension Center Livestock Unit on October 16, 2010.

After an average 200-day feeding period with no death loss, cattle averaged 1272.5 pounds (at plant, shrunk weight). Average daily feed intake per head as fed, was 30.3 pounds while pounds of feed required per pound of gain were 9.2. Diet dry matter was 73 percent. The pen-of-three calves averaged 396 days of age at harvest. Overall pen average daily gain was 3.29 pounds. Feed cost was \$0.737 per pound and total cost of gain without interest was \$0.936. The cattle were marketed on May 4, 2011, and marbling scores averaged 446.2 (low choice). Overall, cattle feeding provided a \$104.73 per head profit including death loss but not interest expense. The feeding and carcass value of spring-born calves can be determined with participation in a feedout project.

Profit before interest expense ranged from \$276.34 per head for pen-of-three cattle with superior growth and carcass traits to \$92.88 per head return for a pen-of-three with poorer feedlot and carcass performance. The average of the top five scoring pens-of-steers was \$239.53 per head while the average of the bottom five scoring pens-of steer (dead loss not included) averaged \$129.84 per head. The overall pen-of-three competition average profit was \$182.58 per head (Table 1).

Table 1. Feeding performance - 2010-2011 Dakota Feeder Calf Show Feedout

Pen of three Competition	Average Birth Date	Average Harvest Weight	Average Daily Gain	Average Weight per Day of Age	Marbling Score	Yield Grade	Ave Feeding Profit or Loss / Head
average of top 5 pens	8-Apr-10	1,342.7	3.67	3.43	480.0 (low Choice)	2.63	\$ 239.53
average of bottom 5 pens with no deads	31-Mar-10	1,232.0	3.01	3.09	391.3 (high Select)	2.91	\$ 129.84
Average	3-Apr-10	1,278.6	3.34	3.23	455.0 (low Choice)	2.67	\$ 182.58
Standard Deviation	13.810	81.290	0.273	0.200	68.560	0.496	39.081
Number	39	39	39	39	39	39.00	39

Calf value is improved with superior carcass performance of marbling, yield grade and carcass weight. Feedlot performance is also important for increased weight gain and heavier carcass weights. Exceptional average daily gains, weight per day of age, marbling scores and profit can be found in North Dakota beef herds. Feedout projects provide a source of information for cattle producers to learn about feedlot performance, genetic differences, and discover cattle value.