

Retained Ownership - Three Years of Experience

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Abstract

Retained ownership of cattle demonstrates that cattle can be source verified back to the cow/calf operation, resulting in benchmarks for weaning, feedlot, carcass and health traits and the subsequent establishment of realistic reachable goals that guide the management of cattle enterprises provided a person is willing to accept the increased risks and associated stress. Ultimately, producers need to start slow, percentage their cattle out at a realistic level that is reflective of their own financial position and their ability to absorb risk. Producers need to understand risk management before they retain ownership of cattle.

Introduction and Justification

In the future, beef producers need to accumulate a data base that adequately describes the producers cattle and then allows that producer to make necessary genetic and management changes within the operation as needed. The genetic and management changes need to be guided by the operation's goals and the industry's goals throughout this process. These goals must be set based on realistic benchmarks attained by data analysis which includes individual operation data. Effective use of source verification and electronic identification should aid considerably in this endeavor.

Material and Methods

The Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC) ranch is located southwest of Manning, North Dakota and pastures cattle in Stark, Dunn and Billings counties and has been in operation since 1905. The current cow herd has approximately a 3/4 Angus X 1/4 Hereford base and currently utilizes Hereford, Angus, Red Angus and Charolais bulls. The cows are utilized for research and managed as three units depending on calving time. Cattle are calved from late February to mid April (spring calving), mid May to mid June (summer calving) and October to early November (fall calving). Cows are allowed to float between calving groups. Spring and summer calves are weaned in late October to mid November, preconditioned for a minimum of 30 days and shipped. Fall calves are weaned in mid April, pastured for the summer and shipped with the spring and summer calves. All calves were marketed through a Kansas feedlot and sold direct to the

slaughter house to facilitate the collection of carcass data. The CHAPS and DATALINE™, programs were utilized to establish ongoing benchmarks for weaning, feedlot, carcass and health traits and the subsequent establishment of realistic reachable goals that guide the management of cattle enterprises.

Results and Discussion

Tables 1-4 present the analyzed production data from the Dickinson Research Extension Center beef herd to illustrate and to increase the understanding of a complete non-segmented beef production system. Producers can establish and maintain a similar professional database by becoming involved with [CHAPS 2000](#). This data allows the establishment of new goals and the adjustment of present goals within the cattle industry to allow for long term survival with the appropriate beef cattle system.

Table 1. Beef Calf Performance for DREC through the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association CHAPS Program.

Year	Pregnancy Percentage	Calving Percentage	Weaning Percentage	Death Loss	Calf Weaning Weight	Average Weaning Age	Pounds Average Weaned per Cow Exposed
1996	95.3%	92.9%	91.4%	2.5%	522	207	475
1997	95.3%	94.2%	80.7%	12.4%	542	223	447
1998	95.1%	93.2%	89.3%	5.6%	554	209	495

Table 2. Receiving Value, Final Value and Net Return for DREC Calves Born in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

			Receiving	Receiving	Final	Final Value	Hot Carcass	Total Net Return

Year	Sex	N	Weight	Value/Hd	Weight	per Calf	Price/Cwt ^a	per Calf ^b
1996	Steer	159	642	\$415	1110	\$767	\$107.73	\$55
1996	Heifer	66	625	\$355	1015	\$693	\$108.74	\$82
1997	Steer	127	671	\$543	1144	\$758	\$105.30	\$(66)
1997	Heifer	74	626	\$487	1103	\$714	\$104.13	\$(76)
1998	Steer	126	707	\$494	1204	\$817	\$105.85	\$79
1998	Heifer	54	669	\$427	1145	\$755	\$102.88	\$112

^a Includes steers and heifers (8 head) sold as realizers (\$51.38/cwt).
^b Includes costs of those steers and heifers that died and those sold as realizers.

Table 3. Feedlot Performance for DREC Calves Born in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

Year	Sex	N	Age at Arrival	Feedlog Average Daily Gain	Days on Feed	Feed Efficiency	Cost of Gain/Cwt	Trucking Cost/Hd
1996	Steer	159	246	3.08	158	6.13	\$56.01	\$16.41
1996	Heifer	66	249	2.94	147	6.24	\$58.04	\$15.48
1997	Steer	127	277	3.06	154	6.46	\$57.67	\$19.01
1997	Heifer	74	269	3.03	160	6.29	\$57.38	\$19.01
1998	Steer	126	270	3.19	157	6.08	\$44.16	\$20.00
1998	Heifer	54	286	3.10	154	5.83	\$42.33	\$19.78

Table 4. Carcass Characteristics for DREC Calves Born in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

			Harvest	Hot Carcass	Rib Eye	Final Yield	Quality	Percent
Year	Sex	N	Age	Weight	Area	Grade	Grade	Choice
1996	Steer	159	402	707	12.5	2.3	2.45	57
1996	Heifer	66	397	636	11.7	2.1	2.36	64
1997	Steer	127	429	716	11.6	2.8	2.34	65
1997	Heifer	74	428	682	11.7	2.5	2.45	70
1998	Steer	126	429	769	13.5	2.9	2.28	72
1998	Heifer	54	439	714	12.8	2.8	2.37	61

^a Quality Grade 1=Prime 2=Choice 3=Select 4=Standard; one dark cutter in 1996, three dark cutters in 1997.

