

October 4, 2001



NDSU Extension Service

BeefTalk: Good Number Use Can Minimize Risk Exposure

By Kris Ringwall, Extension Beef Specialist,

Data collection is such an important part of the beef industry. Data is the knowledge that gives us the power to make management decisions.

In the beef industry, that data is numbers: birth weights, dates of birth, weaning weights, dates of weaning, age of dams etc. These are not numbers that require complex mathematical formulas. The basic concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division can manipulate most of the data into a format necessary for management decisions.

During the past year, very few of these BeefTalk columns could have been developed without the use of these kinds of numbers. Numbers are the essence of evaluations that help determine the direction and magnitude of

change. The application of numbers helps businesses calculate basic inventory, product sold, expenses and much more.

If nothing ever changed in this world, there would be no need for numbers, but change is a regular element of our business environment. Everything changes, and survival depends on knowing the direction of the change as well as the magnitude. Managing beef cattle operations requires numbers in a manageable form to summarize changes and trends. The most obvious need is herd inventory. On Oct. 2, the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center had 349 cows, 348 calves, 106 heifers and 32 bulls.

Although the inventory is generated by a computer software program, the basic requirement is counting and recounting -- something we learned starting in the first grade with the help of many patient, dedicated teachers. The count and recount is repeated daily so the addition or subtraction of cattle within each group can be maintained daily.

Within the beef industry, the number gathering is not such a big problem, but the subsequent utilization seems to present a challenge. At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, an annual case in point is to develop a plan for a preconditioning ration that will prepare steer calves for shipping to the feedlot.

We have records (numbers) from the past. We know the dates. To find a solution, we need a few simple numbers. We reviewed the our 2000 Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) records looking at weaning weight, shipping weights and dates to help estimate what the calves may weigh this year. This set of calves, born late February to early April, weaned at 622 pounds. They were received in the yard at 716

pounds.

To develop a nutritional program, we also need to know the time frame. Currently, the calves are scheduled to be weaned Nov. 6-8 and placed in preconditioning pens on Nov. 9. The trucks are due at the center on Dec. 18 for transfer to the finishing yard. That gives us a 40-day preconditioning period.

The difference between the weaning weight of 622 pounds (estimated based on last year's recorded weaning weights) and ship weight goal of 716 pounds is 94 pounds. If the calves have 40 days of feed, they need to have a ration that will allow them to gain 2.4 pounds per day. Using previous numbers helps us gain confidence in the prediction of future performance. This confidence has value in managing risk. The key to enhancing value of calves is the management of risk. Although risk can be managed within today's markets, knowing numerical history is still the first step. Use numbers to your advantage.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.COM on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0059.

###

Source: Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2427, kringwal@ndsuext.nodak.edu

Editor: Tom Jirik, (701) 231-9629, tjirik@ndsuext.nodak.edu

Required 2001 Calf Weight Gain During Feedlot Preconditioning	
2001 Weaning Weight*	622 pounds
2001 Feedlot Receiving Weight*	716 pounds
Targeted Weight Gain	94 pounds
Required Days for Pre-Conditioning	40
Targeted Average Daily Gain	2.4 pounds

* Estimates based on actual 2000 weaning weight and feedlot receiving weights.

NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center

[Click here for a printable PDF version of this graphic.](#) (5KB b&w graph)

[Click here for a printable EPS version of this graphic.](#) (76KB b&w graph)

[Click here for a EPS file of the BeefTalk logo suitable for printing.](#)
(100KB b&w logo)