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The Great Plains News Feed

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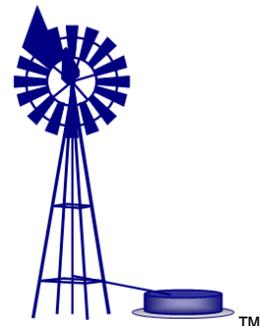
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The Latest Across the Plains



New and Improved Website!!

If you are a regular visitor to our website then you have already noticed our new design and setup. We are happy to be working with EDJE Technologies to redesign our website and bring a new and improved user experience. We will continue to make improvements and add features over the next few months, but many of the same web pages such as our newsletters and markets/weather, powered by AgriCharts, are still available. One of the many improvements we are working on at this time is a user login to provide web-based calculators, client documents, and many more features. Please stop by and take a look www.GPLC-Inc.com.

Save Money \$\$\$ Test your Feeds

Tests are relatively inexpensive, usually costing less than \$18, for the information derived. Contact our office to set up an appointment to have us pull feed samples if we have not done so yet.

What's New in the Industry

Safety Gun for Micotil which Elanco is giving out for free☺

We want to hear from you....

Do you have a question you would like one of the nutritionists to address in depth in our newsletter? Just submit your question through our website www.gplc-inc.com and we will get to work on it.

Calendar of Events

- **Jan 12-27** 107th National Western Stock Show, Denver, CO
- **Jan 18-19** Minnesota Assoc of Ag Educators Ag Tech Conference in St. Cloud, MN
- **Jan 18-Feb 9** Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo, Ft. Worth, TX
- **Jan 22-23** Colorado Cattlemen's Assoc Mid-Winter Conference, Denver, CO
- **Jan 23-24** 106th Annual Minnesota Grain & Feed Assoc Convention & Trade Show, St. Cloud, MN
- **Jan 28-29** Ag Executive Forum at Kansas City Convention Center
- **Jan 29-31** Ag Connect Expo & Summit, Kansas City, MO
- **Jan 29-Feb 4** State Beef Conference, Wamego and Seneca, KS
- **Feb 6-9** National Cattlemen's Beef Assoc Trade Show & Cattle Industry Convention, Tampa, FL
- **Feb 7-24** San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo, San Antonio, TX
- **Feb 10-17** Annual Iowa Beef Expo, Des Moines, IA
- **Feb 12-14** World Ag Expo, Tulare, CA
- **Feb 18-24** Nebraska Cattlemen's Classic, Kearney, NE
- **Feb 22-24** Western Farm Show, Kansas City, MO
- **Feb 24-26** Annual Meat Conference, Nashville, TN



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Timely Reminders



General

- ✓ Analyze Winter Feed Supplies.

Beef

- ✓ Remember before and during a storm to put finishing cattle on storm ration or back up one ration.
- ✓ Vaccinate cows for scour protection.
- ✓ Switch cowherd to Calving & Breeding Mineral 60 days prior to calving.
- ✓ Keep aprons, approaches, and mounds clean and dry for the best performance.
- ✓ Keep cattle bedded during harsh conditions.

Unused Feed

- ✓ He who walks with wise men becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. Proverbs 13:20

Feeding Dairy Type Steer Calves



By Dan Larson, Ph.D.

The interest in feeding dairy type steers is growing and appears reasonably profitable. The cost of gain is approximately \$120-125/cwt on a dairy type steer and the current purchase price on a 300 lb calf is about \$115/cwt. Given those numbers, the breakeven on a 1450 lb finished steer is near \$121/cwt. Based on the current market forecast, that leaves a profit of nearly \$60/steer. This profit potential, coupled with the relative availability of steers, makes feeding dairy type steer calves attractive. However, a few differences exist when feeding dairy type calves compared to beef calves.

Chief among these differences is the potential for frame growth in dairy type calves. Dairy calves are bred for milk production and the larger bodied, more angular cows are typically better producers. However, their offspring are not well suited for feedlot performance. The optimal strategy to limit frame growth is to move to a high concentrate diet as young as possible. It is common practice to feed dairy type steer calves similar to dairy type heifer calves; however, the production goal is substantially different. Limiting roughage in dairy steers is essential for improved feed efficiency throughout the feeding period. The most successful feeding program for Holstein calves will put steers on to a finishing type diet by 300-350 lb of body weight. The goal is to produce a finished steer with a smaller frame which remains

more feed efficient late in the finishing phase.

The primary reason to limit mature frame is to improve efficiency. The larger an animal's body area relative to body weight, the higher the maintenance energy cost. Thus, if frame size and associated body area is reduced, the overhead cost of maintenance energy will be reduced as well. For example, a 1400 lb animal requires 9.7 Mcal/day of net energy for maintenance, while a 1600 lb animal requires 10.8 Mcal/day. If average daily gain is the same between the two animals, feed efficiency will be 10% poorer for the heavier calf. The efficiency difference is larger because the 1600 lb steer is closer to physiological maturity and daily weight gain slows as cattle reach physiological maturity. In other words, the additional 200 lb of weight costs at least an additional \$24 compared to the weight gained between 1200 and 1400 lb. These older, larger framed steers also tend not to deposit fat like younger animals and never appear to finish appropriately.

As I indicated earlier, dairy steers are often managed similar to dairy heifers up to a certain point in the feeding cycle. When purchased feed costs are high, the allure of using feedstuffs harvested on farm is understandable. However, the long-term impacts of this strategy are detrimental to both growth and efficiency of the dairy steer calf. Feed efficiency of young steers on a higher roughage diet may be acceptable, but efficiency in the late finishing phase will most certainly suffer. Consequently, cost of gain will rise substantially and profitability will be compromised.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of finishing dairy type steers is the use of available technologies. These include ionophores, growth promoting implants, and beta-adrenergic agonists. Ionophores such as monensin or lasalocid are widely used, but it is important to note their contribution to feed efficiency, which can be as high as a 7% improvement, but average 4% improvement. The use of growth implants in dairy type steers is much more complicated, due to the length of time on feed and the number of implants required to span the duration. Estrogen only implants are popular in the dairy steer feeding industry because of the long life of the implant. Research has shown a single, 400-day estrogenic implant reduces feed cost of gain by 6.2%. However, a more potent strategy employs a combination of estrogen and the testosterone analog trenbelone acetate (TBA). An appropriately designed combination implant program was shown to improve feed efficiency by 10.4%, compared to non-implanted cattle. In monetary terms, the difference in profitability between the two-implant regimes is \$55, over the feeding period. There is a clear benefit to a well-designed combination implant program. Please contact your nutritionist to design the least labor-intensive system that provides the best return on your investment. The beta-adrenergic agonists Optaflexx and Zilmax have gained tremendous popularity in the past decade. These products are designed to be fed in the last 20-45 days of the feeding period and shift the site of energy deposition from fat to muscle. Dairy type steers are often discounted due to a poor carcass muscle score. Zilmax has been shown to dramatically reduce the discount due to muscle score. However, the most startling benefit of both Optaflexx and Zilmax is the large increase in carcass weight. Producers can expect to return between \$10 and \$15/steer as a result of feeding Optaflexx or Zilmax, respectively.



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Feeding dairy type steers can be profitable; however, one must keep these key concepts in mind. Herd health is ultimately as important as nutrition in young dairy type calves, if not more so. It is also important to keep in mind that dairy type calves are less resilient to changing weather conditions. It is imperative to keep dairy steers well bedded and sheltered from the wind during the cold winter months and sheltered from the sun during the summer. Please contact your nutritionist for more information on feeding dairy type steers and how you can incorporate them into your operation.

Drought Effects on Calf Health

By Zeb Prawl, M.S.



The drought in the southwest has been going on for over 2 full years now. As 2012 comes to a close, Oklahoma received only 65-70% of its annual rainfall, with local areas receiving 50% or even less for the year. The drought was widespread this year, with states not only in the southwest suffering, but also in the Midwest. Coincidentally, this is where most of the nation's beef cows reside, and being dry has had an effect on everybody within the beef industry.

When it comes to herd health, every beef producer is looking to maximize herd health at the lowest possible costs. Obvious inputs into the health program include vaccinations, dewormers, and antibiotics when needed. A less obvious, but nonetheless important input includes the nutrition program. However, very few people consider the environment to be an input. Since we cannot control the cost of it, should it be considered an input? Because the drought has been something that we have had to overcome to promote better cattle health, the answer is yes. It has definitely taken away from our bottom line.

When feed costs go up, it is typical to see beef cattle producers start looking for areas to cut costs. Some producers might switch to lower quality feedstuffs or mineral in search of short-term financial relief. However, the reality is these cuts can be quite costly in the long run. Because we aren't typically measuring daily performance in a beef cow/calf herd and evaluating gains weekly, any changes in the nutrition program can create problems in performance that go undetected for weeks, even months. However, when the environment brings us a change in available nutrition for our cattle as the drought has done, sometimes those undetected problems take even longer to find. That seems to be the issue many cow/calf and stocker operators have had to contend with this fall.

Producers all over the southwest were having random issues with calf health this fall. The typical reasons were considered, such as hot days and cold nights, but even calves that had all the favorable weather conditions still seemed to suffer with health issues on certain operations. After much consideration, several have started to believe that the drought is the root cause and it is a problem that began as much as a year earlier.

Weaned calves that were 6-8 months old this past fall not only endured one of the hottest years on record in Oklahoma, but their mothers have been experiencing that for the past 2-3 years. Those cows have endured an extended period of time when grass has been of lower quality in terms of protein, energy and micronutrients and in short quantity. This means that cows have been receiving less nutrition, while still trying to remain productive. Cow numbers have declined in several states due to the drought, meaning there are fewer cows out there to consume the available forage. Nevertheless, we haven't made up the difference in forage quality with a little higher plane of nutritional supplementation to bridge the gap, and we have compromised the immune systems of newborn calves.

Calves experience 2/3 of their pre-term growth in the last trimester of pregnancy. For a spring calving herd, this occurs during the winter when pasture supply and quality are at yearly lows for most. During the last 45 days, the cow is also producing colostrum, the first milk for newborn calves. If nutrition in any part is lacking for the cow, both calf growth (including the immune system) and colostrum quality will be compromised because the cow will partition nutrition to maintain her own body first. Thus, we can still have a viable calf born with less than ideal nutrition conditions. That calf might also survive and grow while on the cow through the summer. However, the onset of the first true stressor event is usually what breaks the fragile immune system and leaves the calf vulnerable to health issues. That is why we saw perfectly healthy calves all summer seem to just fall apart this fall after weaning and through the backgrounding phase. The problem did not occur overnight or even a week or two before those calves became sick. In some cases, those calves most likely were set up to become sick as much as a year earlier when they were still in utero and their mothers were receiving poor quality nutrition.

So how does one feed a cow these days to program her calf to be healthier throughout its lifetime? It starts with evaluation of the cow. If cows are thin and in a Body Condition Score (BCS) of 4.5 or less, then you should be formulating AND implementing a plan to feed her back into better condition. If the environment is not going to provide that nutrition, then the producer will have to provide it. There are a hundred different ways to feed her, so explore your options. Just because you might have always fed her grass hay and 2 lbs of a 20% cube a day in the past, that might need to change to 3 lbs of that cube to meet her needs. If you've always fed her 30 lbs of silage and 5 lbs of corn a day, maybe it's going to take 40 lbs of silage. In addition, it may be time to switch to some by-products instead of corn to optimize your overall performance and costs. Whatever your forage conditions are, both standing and harvested, along with your feeding capabilities, a program can be put together to optimize cow condition and calf performance in these tough but serious environmental conditions. It usually can be done for less money than what a person assumes. So take the time to evaluate your cow/calf and stocker feeding program for this coming year and don't be afraid to ask for professional help in order to help you make those decisions easier and more informed.