

Slide 1. For this presentation I'll be discussing the steps toward increasing the value of your calves.

Slide 2. The quickest place to start is with adding value through improved management

Slide 3. A good place to start adopting a best management practice is by castrating bulls not intended for breeding. As this graph shows bulls are discounted greatly relative to steer calves. Bulls should be castrated at 3 months of age or sooner, and at 6 to 7 months of age steers typically weight as much as bulls.

Slide 4. Steers and heifers can be implanted pre-weaning. This can add 15 to 20 pounds of additional weight at market. Implanting can easily be accomplished at 3 months of age when adopting other best management practices such as vaccinating calves for blackleg or castrating bulls.

Slide 5. Another best management practice is dehorning calves. The best way to get rid of horns is with genetics.

Slide 6. Another best management practice is with retained ownership. Fenceline weaning is a low stress weaning program. Calves held 45 days after weaning on good quality pasture to add weight until market. Supplemental feeding can add weight and train calves to eat from a bunk.

Slide 7. Retained ownership not only adds value with weight but when vaccinations and booster shots are included in the program it allows calves to be marketed as pre-vaccinated or pre-conditioned. These calves often bring 5 or more dollars per hundredweight.

Slide 8. Adoption of best management practices is an easy way to add value to the current calf crop. For long term improvement we should look to genetics.

Slide 9. Weight has the greatest influence on how many total dollars you get for your calves. This bull is an example of one that is moderate framed, heavy muscled, and heavy boned. The breed you choose should be based on your market and whether or not you intend to keep replacement heifers.

Slide 10. Muscle thickness influences weight and value received. This slide covers USDA muscle grades from 1 which is heavy muscled to 4 which is practically devoid. Bull and cow selection should focus on produce #1 and #2 muscled calves. #1 muscled may be best if all calves will be sold at auction where #2 muscled may be a good balance when replacement females are kept in the herd.

Slide 11. The USDA also provides a frame score system. Small frame is heavily discounted relative to medium and large. Avoid using small frame bulls and cows in your breeding program. A numerical frame score can be calculated based on age and height at the hips. A small frame beef animal will have a numerical score less than 4. Frame score 5 to 6 is idea. Frame scores greater than 6 (very large frame) should be avoided with replacement heifers.

Slide 12. This concludes the presentation on steps toward increasing the value of your calves. Visit with your county Extension agent for more information about improving the value of calves through management, genetics, and let others know the value you place in your stock by enrolling your calves in the natural state preconditioned calf program.