

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Feedlot production and cattle slaughter

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

The latest USDA cattle on feed report shows the August 1 feedlot inventory was 11.09 million head, up 4.6 percent from one year ago. This is the largest August on-feed total in the cattle-on-feed data series going back to 1996. The August total is down from the previous month following the typical seasonal tendency of feedlot inventories to bottom in September before climbing in the fourth quarter. The twelve month moving average of cattle on feed (which removes the seasonality of feedlot inventories) is currently at the highest monthly level since September of 2012.

July feedlot placements and marketings were both above year ago levels, in part due to an extra business day in July 2018 compared to last year. Placements were 107.9 percent of last year, at the upper end of the range of pre-report estimates. Most of the year over year increase in July placements was cattle weighing less than 700 pounds, with these lighter weight placements accounting for 82.7 percent of the total placement increase. It's possible that some of the increase in lightweight placements was due to drought-related early sales of feeder cattle. Total feedlot placements for the first seven months of 2018 are close to year ago levels, up 0.2 percent for the year to date.

July marketings were 105 percent of year earlier levels and, when adjusted for the extra July day this year, daily average marketings were equal to last year. Total feedlot marketings for January through July are up 2.9 percent year over year. The twelve month moving average of feedlot marketings is at the highest level since October 2011.

Feedlot marketings have outpaced placements this year which is helping hold monthly feedlot inventories in the range of four to five percent higher year over year since May. Feedlots have remained current this year continuing a strong performance that began in 2017. A 13 pound drop

in steer carcass weights in 2017 illustrates feedlot timeliness that helped offset larger cattle slaughter last year. While steer carcass weights are up 5.3 pounds for the year to date, carcass weights are up only 1.75 pounds year over year in the past eight weeks, indicating that feedlots, in general, remain current.

Heifer carcass weights are up 8.4 pounds so far this year after declining by 11 pounds in 2017. Heifer carcass weights continue to grow relative to steers, up 8.25 pounds year over year for the last eight weeks. The annual average (twelve month moving average) of heifers as a percent of steer carcass weights has pushed to new record highs each of the last three months.

Total cattle slaughter is up 3.2 percent for the year to date, led by continued sharply higher female slaughter. Heifer slaughter is up 8.5 percent year over year for the first 32 weeks of the year while beef cow slaughter is up 11.5 percent thus far. Dairy cow slaughter is up 4.1 percent year over year and is creeping higher recently. Heifer slaughter will likely show less year over year increase for the remainder of the year compared to large end of year slaughter in 2017 but will likely remain up four to five percent for the year. Steer slaughter continues to run slightly below the large year ago levels; down 0.9 percent for the year to date. Steer slaughter will likely be up year over year for the remainder year and finish with an annual total above last year. Year to date beef production is up 3.2 percent in 2018 with modest increases in steer beef production moderating increased slaughter and carcass weights of heifers and cows.

Why is 45 day weaning important to feeder calf health??

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

The “Value-Added” calf sales will begin in October. Therefore some of the required weaning dates are only a few days away. Most of the “Value-Added” calf sales require that the calves are weaned at least 45 days prior to sale date. Some cow calf producers may wonder why the post-weaning period needs to be so lengthy.

Data from Iowa from over a nine year period in a couple of their feedout tests compared the health status of calves weaned less than 30 days to calves weaned longer than 30 days. Data from over 2000 calves were summarized. Calves that had been sent to a feedlot at a time less than 30 days had a higher incidence of bovine respiratory disease (28%) compared to calves weaned longer than 30 days (13%). The percentage of calves that required 3 or more treatments also was significantly different (6% versus 1%) in favor of calves that had been weaned more than 30 days. In fact the calves weaned less than 30 days were not different in health attributes than calves that were weaned on the way to the feedlot.

A summary of this lengthy study can be found on line at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/ansci/beefreports/asl-1648.pdf>. Vac-45 calves apparently have a real advantage in terms of health compared to calves weaned for less than a month or those weaned on the way to the livestock market for sale date. Certainly part of the “value” in value-added calves can be attributed to properly applied vaccinations. However, there

is little doubt that a portion of the improved health is due to the length of time between weaning and the movement of calves to the next owner.

A listing of the 2018-2019 Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) value added calf sales can be found on the [OQBN website](#). The appropriate weaning dates and contact information for verification and sale information can be found at that address as well. The weaning dates are coming up very soon for the October sales. Therefore producers with calves that meet those guidelines should make the appropriate contacts soon. The OQBN website is <http://oqbn.okstate.edu> .

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