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Understanding Retained Ownership Feedlot And Carcass Data Reports

Producers spending hard earned money on the right kind of bulls have been encouraged by their bull suppliers to try retained ownership on their calves through the feedlot and marketing “in the meat”. Rational is, “if you are paying the dollars for bulls siring calves that can gain and grade, you had just as well put that money in your pocket”. Many times this will earn more dollars than selling calves at weaning or as backgrounded yearlings. Besides, you will usually get a Feedlot Performance and Carcass Data Report back on individual animals and that report has value in culling your cow herd of animals that raise calves that do not do well.

In order to interpret and utilize these data as a cow herd management and culling tool one must understand terminology in the report. While this is not meant to be a complete discussion let’s try for the highlights and keep it simple. Most would agree that the really important piece of Feedlot Performance information on an individual animal is **average daily gain (ADG)** which pretty well trumps everything else on that data sheet. Other terms like days on feed are dependent on ADG and while feed efficiency is important that will usually be calculated on a “pen basis” and not the individual. And, in general, calves with a high ADG have converted feed to gain pretty efficiently.

Understanding the Carcass Data Report is a little more complex, but doesn’t have to be so if you again strive to keep it simple. **Hot Carcass Weight (HCW)** is the carcass weight immediately after hide, feet, head, internal organs and intestines have been removed. In general HCW on fed cattle will range 60% to 64% of the animals live weight and the greater this percentage the better although it is hard to get much above 63% or 64%. As with feedlot ADG

in the Feedlot Performance Report, HCW trumps all other factors in the Carcass Data Report for determining returns for animals sold “in the meat”. While **Quality Grade** and **Yield Grade** premiums can be gravy it is hard to give up a hundred pounds in carcass weight. Additionally, there are usually price discounts on “light weights” (carcasses weighing less than 600 pounds) and “heavy weights” (carcasses weighing more than 950 or 1000 pounds).

There are premiums to be earned for **Quality Grade** which is our best indication of the eating quality of beef (tenderness, juiciness and flavor). Quality Grade is determined by degree of **Carcass Maturity** (age) and **Marbling Score or Percent Intramuscular Fat (%IMF)**. While carcass maturity is not generally shown on a report, it is critical calves were estimated to be between 9 and 30 months of age which places them in Maturity Group A. The following table then shows the relationship among Quality Grade, Descriptive Marbling, Marbling Score and %IMF for Maturity Group A Carcass:

<u>QUALITY GRADE</u>	<u>MARBLING</u>	<u>MARBLING SCORE</u>	<u>%IMF</u>
Select Minus	Slight 0-40	4.0 to 4.4	2.3 to 3.0%
Select Plus	Slight 50-90	4.5 to 4.9	3.1 to 3.9%
Choice Minus	Small	5.0 to 5.9	4.0 to 5.7%
Average Choice	Modest	6.0 to 6.9	5.8 to 7.6%
Choice Plus	Moderate	7.0 to 7.9	7.7 to 9.7%
Prime Minus	Slight Abundant	8.0 to 8.9	9.9 to 12.1%
<u>Prime Plus</u>	<u>Moderate Abundant</u>	<u>9.0 Plus</u>	<u>12.3% Plus</u>

Carcasses with Quality Grades of Average Choice and Choice Plus are considered Premium Choice [like Certified Angus Beef (CAB)] although there are several other Premium Choice Programs. Most “quality grids” consider Choice Minus as the base and there are discounts for Select Carcasses and premiums for Premium Choice with possibly further premiums for a Prime Carcass. Sometimes these premiums can be quite significant, but again seldom make up for light HCW.

Yield Grade (YG) (reported as 1 to 5 - lean to fat) is much more complicated. While it primarily measures the Outside FAT measured between the 12th and 13th ribs that figure is adjusted up or down based on an estimate of internal fat and a further adjustment for the size of the Rib Eye Muscle as related to the HCW. However, in general, 2/10" FAT is YG 2.5; 4/10" FAT is YG 3; 6/10" FAT is YG 3.5; 8/10" FAT is YG 4.0; 1 Inch FAT is YG 4.5; and 1& 2/10" FAT is YG 5. Yield Grade 3 is generally the base with small premiums for YG less than 3 and discounts, sometimes severe penalties, for YGs 4 and 5.

Since most feedlots will try to market your cattle when FAT is somewhere close to ½" (0.45" to 0.60"), what you would like is an 800 to 900 pound carcass with a Yield Grade of 3 or less and a Quality Grade of Average Choice or greater.

The Spitzer family invites you to their twenty third annual **BULL SALE** scheduled for **Saturday, February 27, 2016**. If you wish your name added to their mailing list call 864/972-9140, write SPITZER RANCH, 1511 HWY 59, Fair Play, SC, 29643 or send an email note to spitzeranch@mindspring.com. They publish both Summer and Winter Newsletters each year which always provide current Bull Test Performance Reports as well as educational tips, inspiration and insights into a variety of timely topics of interest to those cattlemen whose goal is increased profitability. Also be sure to visit their WEB SITE at www.srbulls.com and you might join over 1750 other ranchers who follow their posts and QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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