

Adding Value to Feeder Calves

Clyde Lane, Jr.
Professor - Animal Science
University of Tennessee

Every beef producer wants to receive more money from the sale of his/her feeder calves. Extra value does not just happen. There are a number of things that producers can do to increase the amount of dollars received for a calf at the market.

The first thing that has an effect on the value of a feeder calf is the breeding dates of the cows. This breeding date determines the time that the calf will be ready for market. For example, if the calves are to be sold in October and the bull is turned in with the cows in July, the calves will only be seven months old. If the bull is turned in April the calves will be three months older and will be heavier at sale time.

Improving marketability of calves results in increased income. Bull calves should be castrate because they usually sell for \$5.00 to \$7.00 per hundred less than comparable steers. Calves with horns sell for \$1.50 to \$2.00 per hundred less than calves without horns.

Another easy way to add value is to add weight by implanting. Research and demonstrations have shown that a single implant can add an extra 15 to 25 pounds to the weigh of a calf in approximately 100 days. Re-implanting according to manufacturers recommendations will add additional weight.

Preconditioning for 45 or more days can also add to the value of calves. Buyers are willing to pay more for groups of quality calves that have been vaccinated, weaned and bunk broke.

Utilizing sales that merchandise preconditioned calves in groups can help producers get paid for the improved management and marketing of calves. Maintaining birth records and marketing through Process Verified Program (PVP) sales can also add value to calves. For additional information on adding vale to feeder calves, contact the local Extension office.