

Marketing Cull Cows

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Cull cows add the profits to the beef operation. Producers can increase the returns from these animals by following a few management guidelines.

First, animals need to be culled on a timely basis. Cull cows before they lose body condition due to age or a physical problem. Many times productivity has started to decrease before the major decrease in body condition has occurred.

Be sure that cows are marketed before they become candidates for being downers. Cows that are old, arthritic or have other physical problems may not be able to withstand the rigors of marketing. Markets cannot accept downers and they do not want those that may not make it through the entire marketing process.

Keep in mind the value of cows at the time of culling. Cows that are too thin, below a body condition score (BCS) of four, will be severely discounted. Cows that are too fat will also receive discounts because of the trim that must be made on the carcass. Plan the marketing for the time that the cows will be in a reasonable body condition (BCS of 4 to 6).

The culling program on the farm should include the removal of those animals that are not producing a calf with a value greater than the annual cow costs. Individual production records should be kept so these animals can be identified and removed from the herd.

In those situations where cows are kept to improve body condition, it is critical that the decision to cull is carried out. It is easy to allow a cow to remain in the herd after she improves body condition and has a much better appearance.

Remember that value can be added to cull animals by improving the management and nutrition program. For more information on cow culling or other topics on beef production, contact the local Extension office.