

Selecting and Developing Replacement Heifers

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The future of the beef herd depends on the heifers that are selected as replacements. Beef producers must select the best heifers and then develop them properly.

Several factors must be considered in the selection of replacement heifers. First, select the oldest heifers in the calf crop. These will be from the most fertile cows. Also they will be older and have more time to be developed for placement into the breeding herd. Be sure to check the records to locate the heifers that have the greatest growth potential. Don't forget to take potential milking ability into consideration, however, do not select for more milking ability than the forage base can supply.

Do not forget to do a visual appraisal to insure that the "right kind" are being kept and will produce calves that are desired by the buyers at the market. Remember that disposition should be included in the selection process. Do not keep heifers that get away at marketing time or get too rowdy when the group is placed in the corral prior to marketing.

After heifers are selected, it is important that they be properly developed. Include the heifers in your vaccination program. Feed the heifers to gain about 1.75 pounds per day between weaning and breeding. The goal is to have the heifers weighing 60% to 65% of mature at breeding without being fat.

From breeding to calving the heifers should be fed to gain enough weight so they are at 80% to 85% of mature weight at calving. Again this gain should be growth gain and not fat.

The goal is to produce desirable, productive females that will make a contribution to the beef herd. For more information, contact your local Extension Agent.