



Quality Time™

Quality news and features for farm broadcasters from Certified Angus Beef LLC
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Interactive Feature (QTIF)

The cost of variability

Efficiency is a key to success in cattle feeding. That's because it is such a narrow-margin business. But price discovery is all about weight and quality, where variation within a pen can present challenges when it comes to selling on a carcass-merit basis. On the other hand, says Certified Angus Beef feedlot specialist Paul Dykstra (DIKE stra), greater uniformity in a pen brings more efficiency and marketing opportunities.

An eight-year study on 25,000 cattle in a C-A-B partner feedlot found a lot of variation. Receiving weights varied by an average of 338 pounds within pens. Carcass weight varied by 293 pounds and average daily gain varied by 2.8 pounds per day—all within the same pens.

Mr. Dykstra can explain the dollar impact of these numbers, and he has some tips for increasing uniformity in your calves.

Q. Paul, first of all, how can we translate these data in terms of profitability?

Actuality, Dykstra (:26): “The most uniform calves varied by almost \$20 per hundred weight for carcass value, whereas the least uniform cattle varied by almost \$40. Combining that receiving weight difference, average daily gain discrepancy, as well as the carcass value per hundred weight all together into a financial number equaled out to almost \$460 difference in the most-profitable *versus* the least-profitable calf within the pen.”

(LINK: http://www.cabpartners.com/news/radio/dykstra_variability_qtif2_3_1.mp3)

Q:...within the pen.

Q. So, that starts to cut into profits pretty quickly. What are some steps producers can take to boost uniformity, whether they are looking at retaining ownership or buying calves to feed?

Actuality, Dykstra (:17): “One needs to look at the breed background of the calves and the uniformity of, not only their breed, but their closeness of sire uniformity within the group. As well,

the weight and genetic uniformity of the cow herd and the frame score and likeness of those cows back at the ranch is important.”

(LINK: http://www.cabpartners.com/news/radio/dykstra_variability_qtif2_3_2.mp3)

Q :...ranch is important.

Q. Besides genetics, what management factors can help make calves more uniform—does shortening the calving season help?

Actuality, Dykstra (:29): “A shorter calving season certainly adds to the uniformity of a calf crop as well as calves being sorted into like types and weights in packages that will go together nicely in the feedlot pen and hopefully have a common out date when they are finished. As well, the final piece is to, if possible, sort calves using ultrasound and visual appraisal as they get near the end of the feeding period so they can hit those carcass targets and stay away from discounts on the grid.”

(LINK: http://www.cabpartners.com/news/radio/dykstra_variability_qtif2_3_3.mp3)

Q:...discounts on the grid.

Thanks Paul. We’ve been talking with Paul Dykstra, feedlot specialist with Certified Angus Beef. He’s been sharing some tips on steps you can take to create uniformity and boost profitability in the calves you feed.

END