

# ***COW/CALF CORNER***

## ***The Newsletter***

From the **Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

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**\*\*\* Cow Calf Corner Newsletter Will Take a Holiday Break and Return in January\*\*\***

#### **Feedlots End the Year with Larger Inventories**

Derrell S. Peel, OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

The December Cattle on Feed Report showed December 1 feedlot inventories up one percent from last year. Larger placements were anticipated but the actual number was higher than expected, up 12 percent from one year ago. Marketings were lower than expected, down three percent from 2006. The combination of higher than expected placements and lower than expected marketings make for a surprisingly large on-feed total that leaves the fed market on a bearish note at the end of the year.

However, it probably won't mean much in a month or two. Large November placements is mostly a reflection of expected supplies of yearling cattle combined with the extremely limited wheat pasture that resulted in unexpectedly large numbers of lightweight feeders moving into feedlots. The final factor is a relatively large number of Canadian feeders imported this fall. However, placements will likely be lower in the first few months of 2008 and feedlots inventories will promptly drop back below year earlier levels.

Several short-run factors have combined to create a weak tone to fed markets before Christmas. Demand is still a concern but fundamentally tight supplies and current feedlots should reassert stronger fed prices after the holidays. Fed prices should recover to the mid-\$90s and move toward the upper \$90s by the end of the first quarter of 2008. Feeder markets will likely recover as well, as there seems little prospect for sizable March wheat pasture runs and May grazeout runs. Many of the feeder cattle being backgrounded this winter will likely remain on low gain programs thru the winter and move into summer grazing next year. Feeder supplies available for placements will likely remain very tight through the first half of 2008. Wishing you all the best for 2008... Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## **How Do Santa's Reindeer Get the Job Done??**

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Have you ever wondered how Santa's reindeer can make that monumental journey on Christmas Eve? Let's look into some key facts about reindeer that may help us understand how they get Ole St. Nick on his appointed rounds over the world.

First of all, historians report that reindeer have been domesticated by humans for over 5000 years. Since Santa himself is no spring chicken, we can assume that they have worked together for quite awhile. They should not have any trouble finding their way around. There is no need to worry about Santa and reindeer getting lost!

We do know that reindeer are ruminants. They are like cattle in this regard. They have four compartments to their stomach. Of course Santa gets them filled up with hay before he leaves the North Pole, so they should have plenty of feed stored in the four compartments to make it all around the globe. Also, cattle nutritionists have known for years that hay digests more slowly than grain, therefore the big meal that the reindeer eat before the journey should last even longer. Or just like your mom says "It'll stick to their ribs!".

As for drinking water that should be no problem whatsoever. In their homeland the water is all frozen so they are used to getting the moisture they need by eating snow. So as the sleigh is parked on snowy rooftops in cold weather cities, the reindeer can take on the moisture they need if they get thirsty.

How do they keep warm while flying around on Christmas Eve? The fur that they have is very thick and can hold a lot of air. The "blanket" of insulation combining fur and air helps keep them warm in even the coldest of climates. Plus flying around Christmas night in many areas of the world that are warmer than they have at home should not be a problem.

How do they fly? Well that's a tougher question, but let's look at what we do know about them. Reindeer are amazingly fast runners on the ground. A newborn baby reindeer at one day of age can out run the fastest person on earth. (Ask any graduate student at the University of Alaska that is supposed to catch them and weigh them as babies.) By the time that they are fully grown it is hard to tell what speeds that they could reach. Next remember those huge antlers. Antlers of adult male reindeer can be as much as 4 feet long! Just think about it. Each reindeer has 2 sets; that's 8 feet of antlers and with eight reindeer or nine, if we count Rudolph on foggy nights, that is 64 to 72 feet of total antler span. A typical small airplane only has about 20 to 30 feet of wingspan. Certainly it seems feasible those eight reindeer running that fast with all that antler span could get off the ground.

There is a myth about reindeer that we should clear up. You have heard the poem that says that they have tiny reindeer feet. Actually they have a very wide large hoof that they use at home to dig through the snow to find grass and moss to eat. You've got to think that those wide hooves would come in handy for sliding to rather sudden stops on the small landing sites that Santa has to work with on Christmas Eve.

And you've probably heard the song about up on the house top click, click, click. Well, it is true that reindeer do make a clicking sound as they walk. They have a tendon that snaps over a bone joint and makes a clicking sound on every step.

These are just a few facts about Santa's Reindeer. Maybe this will help us understand that age-old mystery that occurs every Christmas Eve.

Merry Christmas to all and we'll visit with you after New Years to again talk about beef cows on the Cow Calf Corner.

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