

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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What's Next for Beef Demand?

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

There is understandably a lot of concern in the beef industry about beef demand in the coming months. The expected decrease in beef production in 2013 will likely represent a 3.3 percent decrease in domestic per capita supplies. The decrease could be even sharper in 2014 with consumers potentially facing another 5 percent decrease in domestic per capita beef supplies. The pressure for higher wholesale and retail beef prices will continue to grow at through 2014. The question often posed to me is "will beef be priced so high that consumers will quit buying beef?"

I don't believe there is much danger that consumer will entirely quit eating beef. Beef includes many different specific products and the question is more one of how consumers will adjust the mix of products and total expenditure on beef. One of the ongoing concerns is the slow recovery of beef demand from the 2009-2010 recession. Middle meat demand was weakened the most as consumers switched from steaks to hamburger and other value cuts. In that process, a higher percent of total carcass value was borne by the end meats, i.e. Chuck and Round portions of the carcass. In 2011 and 2012, middle meat values advanced along with end meat values, thus maintaining the relatively large contribution of end meats to total value. Though it has been very slow, beef demand has recovered from the recession. The All Fresh beef demand index provided by the Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC) shows significant recovery in the index from the 2010 lows. The 2012 annual beef demand index level is near levels not seen since 2008. The beef demand index for the fourth quarter of 2012 posted a sharp jump to the highest levels since the fourth quarter of 2007.

While beef demand is increasing, it is very likely not increasing fast enough relative to price pressure from falling beef supplies in 2013 and 2014. Retail beef prices will undoubtedly push to new record levels in the next two years. Several factors will influence exactly how those price increases will be manifest in various beef markets in the coming months. The availability and price of pork and poultry will impact beef price increases. Both the pork and poultry industries have been resistant to production cutbacks. Production of both pork and poultry are currently forecast to be on either side of unchanged year over year in 2013. Relatively large supplies of pork and poultry will temper beef price increases to some extent.

International beef trade will also impact domestic beef markets by changing both the net available supply of beef in the U.S. but also by changing the mix of products in the U.S. market. Strong hamburger demand and higher prices in the U.S. market will likely support increased beef imports, especially from Australia and New Zealand who are major suppliers of processing beef. Beef imports from Mexico, Brazil and Uruguay were also up in 2012. On the export side, the recent Russian ban on U.S. beef and pork could hurt 2013 exports to that market if a resolution is not found. The recent opening of the Japanese market to meat from animals up to 30 months of age will increase access to that market, certainly over time, and may provide valuable support for middle meats as it did in 2010 and 2011. However, high U.S. prices combined with recent devaluation of the Japanese Yen, which makes U.S. beef even more expensive, may temper the pace of expanded beef exports to Japan in 2013.

U.S. beef consumers will continue to adjust beef expenditures by adjusting the mix of products consumed. Consumers are likely to continue adjusting the frequency and quantity of consumption of expensive middle meats. This process is being aided by increasing indications

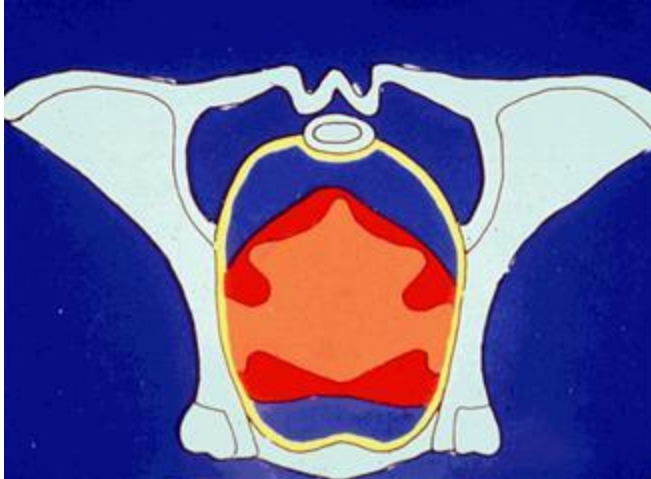
that some restaurants are reducing portion sizes in an attempt to reduce product cost and thus maintain margins with fewer menu price increases. There is concern that beef demand, especially steak demand, is becoming more of a “special occasion” meal rather than a regular part of beef consumption. Though this seems to part of the consumer response since the recession it is not clear whether consumer preferences have changed permanently. One thing is very clear; with steaks carrying a premium price the next two years or more, it is imperative that the beef industry do everything possible to ensure premium quality as well. Beef has always been significantly more expensive than pork and poultry because it enjoys strong preferences for the flavor and tenderness of beef. Beef does not have to be the cheapest meat but it does need to provide the best value relative to price in order to preserve beef demand at record price levels.

Rotating a Calf at Parturition to Aid in Delivery

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Throughout the course of a calving season, some heifers and a few cows may need assistance at calving time. If the heifer is not making real progress within one hour of the first appearance of the water bag or baby calf feet, she probably will need assistance. The adult cow should deliver her calf within a half hour after the appearance of the water bag or baby calf feet. Pulling should not be done until the cow has been examined and cervical dilation is complete. Also the producer should check to see if twins or a fetal “monster” (deformed calf) is the reason for the difficult birth. Pulling on a calf should be done only when the presentation and posture of the calf are normal. This applies both to a normal anterior (forward) position and a posterior (backward) position. **KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS.** If the delivery is more than you can handle with relative ease, **CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY!**

A large calf, with shoulders too wide for the pelvis, is sometimes held up at this stage. If so, pull one limb only so that the elbow and shoulder of one limb only enter the pelvis. Then, while the pull on the limb is continued, the other limb is treated in the same way until both feet project equally from the genital passage. Now apply traction on both limbs and on the head until the head protrudes from the vulva, and from this stage the principle traction is exerted on the limbs again. It can be seen that traction on both limbs at the same time will result in both shoulders entering the pelvis at once.



(Figure 1. Pulling both shoulders (or both hips if the calf is backwards) through at the same time may result in shoulder lock or hip lock.)

The pelvis has an oval shaped opening with the largest dimension being the vertical axis, and the smaller dimension is the horizontal width. If the shoulders of a large birth weight calf can be made to enter on a slant and can be pulled through in that position, delivery will be made easier. Apply traction that will allow the calf to be turned about 90 degrees so that the widest part of the shoulders will match the largest dimension of the pelvic opening.

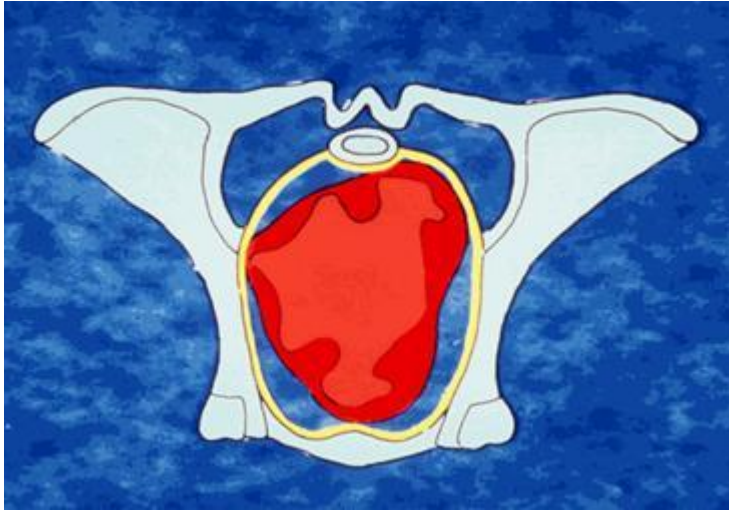


(Figure 2. The chest or torso has a greater vertical dimension than horizontal).

After the shoulders have passed the pelvic opening, the calf can be returned to the normal upright position because the torso is larger in the vertical dimension.

Hiplock is the next likely obstruction that is met when pulling a calf. If the passage of the hind end of the calf presents any difficulty, the body of the calf should be grasped and twisted to an

angle of about 45 degrees. Delivery is then made with the calf half-turned on its side. This allows for easier passage of a calf with well developed stifle joints.



(Figure 3. Rotating the calf to match the thick part of the hips or stifle joint with the greatest dimension of the pelvic opening.)

Again: **KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS.** If the delivery is more than you can handle with relative ease, **CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY!**

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