

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Estimated Mid-Year U.S. Cattle Inventory Down

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The status of cattle inventories in the U.S. is unknown at this time. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service cancelled the report mid-year report, so there are no official July 1 survey-based estimates of cattle inventories by class, 2013 calf crop, or total Cattle on Feed available. At the recent annual meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC), members from around the country were polled as to their expectations for the beef cow herd and beef replacement heifer situation in their region. Nationally and by region, the group was unanimous that the beef cow herd is down so far this year, with the U.S. assessments ranging from less than one percent to over two percent. The majority of the group indicated that the beef cow herd was likely down between one and two percent as of July 1. Assessments on beef replacement heifers was more variable with some limited view that modest heifer retention was occurring in some areas with a majority feeling that no significant heifer retention was occurring yet or that some heifers earlier retained for breeding had been diverted into feeder supplies.

Based on member input and other available data, the LMIC has developed estimates in the format of previous July 1 inventory reports. It is important to remember that these estimates do not reflect USDA survey and statistical methodology and should not be viewed as a replacement for official estimates.

LMIC estimates for July 1, 2013:

	2012 (USDA)*	2013 (LMIC)*	2013 as % of 2012
All Cattle and Calves	97800	96050	-1.8

All Cows	39700	39100	-1.5
Beef Cows	30500	29850	-2.1
Dairy Cows	9200	9250	+0.5
All Heifers	15700	15500	-1.3
Beef Replacements	4200	4200	0.0
Dairy Replacements	4100	4150	+1.2
Other Heifers	7400	7150	-3.4
Steers, >500 lbs.	14000	13700	-2.1
Bulls, > 500 lbs.	1900	1850	-2.6
Calves, <500 lb.	26500	25900	-2.3
Calf Crop	34279	33550	-2.1

*All inventory values in thousand head

These estimates reflect indications from various data that are available and historical relationships; importantly they started with a baseline of the July 1, 2012 mid-year report. The only category posting any year-on-year increase was the number of dairy cows. All cattle and cows as of July 1st were likely down between one and two percent. Beef cows likely dropped just over two percent, resulting in reductions for seven consecutive years.

Beef cow slaughter was down 3.1 percent year-over-year in the first half of 2013. Beef cow slaughter has fallen sharply in the past three weeks and is likely to be down for most of the remainder of the year. The number of heifers on feed usually decreases between January and July and was down this year but dropped less than normal indicating that some animals previously identified as replacements likely entered feedlots in the first six months of this year. Heifer slaughter is down year to date but has been above year ago levels in the last four weeks, indicating the larger number of heifers finishing in feedlots. Heifer retention may well pick up in the last half of the year. Still, the combined effects of higher beef cow slaughter and decreased heifers entering the herd likely means that the beef cow herd will be down year-over-year on January 1, 2014

The lack of USDA mid-year inventory estimates prevents the usual calculations of estimated feeder supplies outside feedlots. However, using the LMIC estimates above along with additional assumptions about the total U.S. cattle on feed inventory as of July 1, suggests that feeder supplies were down fully two percent year-on-year. This estimate factors in a smaller 2013 calf crop and reduced feeder cattle imports in 2013. Renewed heifer retention interest in the last half of this year could squeeze feeder supplies dramatically in 2014.

Note: The LMIC is a unique cooperative effort of Land Grant Universities, USDA agencies, and associate organizations that supports livestock market analysis, education, and applied research (for more information see: www.lmic.info).

Late Summer Supplementation with Protein for Young and/or Thin Cows

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Because condition at calving and breeding are so important, it may at first seem silly to begin worrying about condition in the latter part of summer. However, it must be remembered that there are few economical ways to increase body condition once winter has arrived. So, good body condition in the winter must depend on the nutritional program the previous summer. If in August, the cows are in good condition and are rapidly regaining weight lost the past winter, the program can run normally.

If, on the other hand, the past winter was severe and cows are still thin in August, with every likelihood that they will be thin going into the next winter, thought needs to be given about the most economical method of improving condition before winter. Weaning dates can be moved up; remember calves would be young and weaning weights will be reduced. A well-planned supplementation program may offer help. When forage is available, feeding small amounts of high protein supplements during late summer can efficiently increase weight and condition gain of spring calving cows. An Oklahoma State University trial gave encouraging results.

Feeding as little as .6 lb/head/day of soybean meal, (about 1.5 lb/head, 3 times per week) during August and September increased cow weight by 25 lb. and improved condition score by .67 units. A supplement level of 1 to 1.5 lbs per day of the soybean meal probably would have been more desirable and provided great weight increases. (Source : OSU Beef Cattle Manual; 3rd Edition). The important point is that during late summer and early fall, protein supplements can permit efficient increases in weight and body condition when adequate forage is available. If one waits until winter to try to increase cow weight and body condition, protein supplement alone will likely not be sufficient and larger amount of energy supplements and/or hay will be required.

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