

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Fall Feeder Cattle Marketing Options

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

Oklahoma feeder cattle prices have increased about \$20/cwt. for all weights since the lows in late May. After being on the defensive much of the first half of the year, feeder cattle markets are poised to hold stronger in the second half of the year. Good prospects for a big corn crop and corn price relief combined with significantly improved forage conditions is being reflected in stronger feeder prices and open up more marketing options for cow-calf and stocker producers.

Calf prices are currently about \$25/cwt. higher than this time last year. In 2012, calf prices increased \$20-22/cwt between August and November. Some of the increase in calf prices that occurred between August and November of 2012 has likely already happened this year. Basis for lightweight feeders continues to be relatively strong compared to Feeder futures. An average basis and the current Feeder futures price would indicate that 500 pound steers in OKC would be at least \$172/cwt. in November but the current strong basis suggests that the price could be \$180/cwt or higher this fall. Both the current cash market and the Feeder futures suggest that cow-calf producers should expect calf prices that are \$10-15/cwt. higher than last year in November.

The recent increase in feeder cattle prices has significantly increased the value of additional weight gain for feeder cattle. The most recent combined Oklahoma auction prices reflect a stocker value of gain between \$1.05 and \$1.15/pound for all combinations of beginning weight and gains of 50-350 pounds. This suggests that cow-calf producers have an opportunity to improve calf value even more with preconditioning or retained ownership. It is an alternative that cow-calf producers should consider relative to available feed resources, management and labor constraints. The improved value of gain suggests that stocker producers have strong fall and winter grazing opportunities despite higher purchase prices for stocker calves this fall. Current moisture conditions have Oklahoma set up for the best fall and winter grazing

prospects in several years. Whether selling weaned calves, retaining raised calves or purchasing stockers, the feeder market is offering generally strong revenue potential for most producers.

Are You Ready for the Fall-calving Season?

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Fall-calving season is just around the corner. In fact, the start of the fall calving season may be closer than many producers realize. Now is the time to get the calving kit ready and make certain that the calving shed is clean, in good operating condition, and ready for business.

Oklahoma State University physiologists studied early fall (August) and late fall (October) calving cows. Data from two successive years were combined for 50 Angus X Hereford crossbred cows. The “early” and “late” fall calving cows had been artificially inseminated in early November or early January, respectively. Semen from the same sire was used for all cows. All cows were exposed to a single cleanup bull for 35 days at 4 days after the AI season. The weather prior to calving was significantly different for late pregnancy in the two groups. The average maximum temperature the week before calving was 93 degrees F. for the “early” fall group. The average maximum temperature the week before parturition in the “late” calving group was 66 degrees F. There was a 100% survival rate for calves in both groups and both groups of cows had very high re-breeding rates (90% and 92%, respectively).

The average gestation length for the “early” cows was 6 days shorter (279 days) as compared to the “late” cows (285 days) in year 1. The average gestation length for the “early” cows was 4 days shorter (278 days) as compared to the “late” cows (282 days) in year 2. Producers with early fall-calving cows should expect calves to start coming several days ahead of the “textbook gestation table” dates. **They should begin their routine heifer and cow checks at least a week to 10 days ahead of the expected first calving date.** Source: Kastner, Wettemann, and co-workers. [2004 Oklahoma State University Animal Science Research Report](#).

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