

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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No U.S. Data; Some Mexican Data

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The lack of federal government data collection has already impacted livestock markets. The impacts will grow exponentially if the situation persists for many more days. The most significant initial impacts are on business arrangements that base beef and cattle transactions on USDA price reports. While the “last available data” suffices for a few days, it becomes less and less valid with more time. Agricultural markets rely, to a much greater extent than most industries, on publically supported data collection and dissemination and for very good reason; there is tremendous public value in assuring smoothly functioning agricultural markets and reliable food supplies.

For the cattle market broadly, the impacts have not been too severe so far but will grow dramatically in the coming days. Not having the flow of daily and weekly data is like driving with no headlights into the ever-increasing blackness of twilight. Price determination becomes more uncertain and price discovery becomes more labored and inefficient in the growing vacuum of market information. The impacts of no data are many and widespread. Without price reports, cow-calf producers are uncertain of the value and market trends for calves; stocker producers cannot assess cattle markets in order to plan stocker purchases for winter grazing. Futures prices become less reliable and likely more volatile. Cash settled contracts, like the Feeder Cattle futures, will be unable to terminate properly without market reports. The lack of daily and weekly slaughter data makes it impossible to assess the impacts of withdrawing Zilmax from the market; or to assess indications of herd expansion with cow and heifer slaughter. The monthly Cattle on Feed report may be delayed, cancelled or decreased in accuracy, even if the shutdown is over before the release date because it is based on surveys that should be in progress at the current time. There are many more current examples and many more will arise if the situation persists.

Mexican cattle export data is reported on an annual cycle, a “crop year”, if you will, from September through August. The latest Mexican cattle export data through August of 2013 shows

a 12 month export total of about 800,000 head of cattle exports from Mexico to the U.S. This is down 47 percent from the previous annual cycle. U.S. data confirms that the year-to-date pace of cattle imports implies a similar calendar year total. Of course, the previous year was the second largest ever but the recent total is also 17 percent below the 2004-2010 annual average in the Mexican data.

Fewer cattle are coming to the U.S. from all of the key exporting states in Mexico compared to last year's elevated levels. Several states are down, not only from last year, but are also below long term average levels indicating the drawdown in cattle inventories in those states which include Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, Veracruz and Zacatecas. Two important exporting States, Durango and Sonora, whose exports were down in the 12 month period, were still exporting at levels higher than the long term average. However, the long term average in Durango reflects several years of reduced exports due to disease restrictions. In general, the drop in Mexican cattle exports to the U.S. reflects an overall shortage of cattle inventories in the country as well as demand for cattle in Mexico to maintain domestic beef production,

Interval Feeding of Protein Supplement to Cows on Range

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Dry, pregnant beef cows grazing low quality warm season pastures in late summer, fall, and early winter are usually supplemented with high protein supplements. It would be desirable to feed the supplement at less frequent intervals (than daily) to reduce labor, equipment, and gasoline costs. A study done at OSU in the 1990's has indicated that cows fed the same amount of total 40% crude protein supplement either 3 or 6 days per week perform similarly. Interestingly enough, similar research was reported almost 40 years ago with similar results. Below in table 1 are the key results of this experiment. Cows were fed 21 pounds of protein cubes per week from November 17 until March 9. From March 10 to April 22, cows were fed 28 pounds of supplement per week and only 17.5 pounds per week from April 23 to May 15. Cows were provided free choice grass hay when snow or ice covered the standing forage, or when the temperature was less than 40 degrees and raining or was less than 25 degrees at noon. Cows were exposed to bulls for 75 days beginning May 17 and palpated for pregnancy 90 days after the breeding season. In this trial, the cattle performance was virtually identical and was not affected by the interval at which the cows were fed the protein supplement.

Table 1. Influence of supplementation interval on body weight, body condition score, and pregnancy rate of beef cows. ([Wettemann and Lusby, 1994 OSU Animal Science Research Report](#))

Days supplement fed per week	3 days	6 days
Weight loss (lbs) November to April (after calving)	242	255

Body condition score loss November to April	1.0	1.1
Re-breeding percentage after 75 day breeding season	98%	94%

Interval feeding will be successful when feeding a high protein supplement in a relatively small package. In situations where forage is limited and large amounts (5 pounds or more of supplement per day) of high energy supplements must be fed, then daily feeding is still necessary.

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