

# **COW/CALF CORNER**

The Newsletter

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

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## **Current Cattle Markets Foretell 2014 Market Expectations**

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The counter-seasonal behavior of cattle markets this fall indicates the transition that is occurring in beef and cattle markets. The fourth quarter of 2013 provides insight into the general expectations for markets in 2014. Cattle slaughter for the year to date is down 1.7 percent but is down an average of 3.6 percent in the last four weeks. Though beef production is down only 1.1 percent for the year to date, it is down an average of 2.9 percent the last four weeks. Both cattle slaughter and beef production are expected to decline for the remainder of the year bringing fourth quarter cattle slaughter down over 5.5 percent, year over year, and beef production down over 5 percent. For 2014, cattle slaughter is expected to decrease roughly 7 percent year over year leading to decreased beef production of over 6.5 percent for the year.

Choice boxed beef prices have averaged above \$200/cwt for the last four weeks and fed cattle prices have averaged above \$130/cwt for the same period. Both of these prices could average at or above these levels for the entire year of 2014, with spring peaks of \$215/cwt or higher for Choice boxed beef and fed cattle prices approaching \$140/cwt for a spring top. All eyes will be on the demand side as the supply side of these markets will certainly support even higher prices than these if demand is sufficient.

Feeder cattle prices have strengthened this fall to the highest levels of the year. Heavy feeder prices are at record levels and, while calf prices have not quite exceeded the spring 2012 record price levels, they surely will in the spring of 2013, barring something unforeseen. Feeder supplies are no doubt tightening this fall with a smaller 2013 calf crop, fewer feeder cattle imports in 2013 and accelerating replacement heifer demand this fall. The 2014 calf crop will be as small, or smaller, than this year; feeder imports are likely to remain low; and replacement heifer demand will remain very strong as long as forage conditions are favorable.

Breeding female and replacement heifer demand is very strong this fall. Replacement heifer demand that emerged about a month ago in the Northern Plains, has now spread to much of the central part of the country with numerous reports of lightweight heifers selling at prices well above steer prices. Last week in El Reno, Oklahoma, several sets of heifers sold in the weekly feeder auction as replacements; including a market-topping set of 668 pound heifers at \$208.55/cwt. (\$1393/head) and another set of 560 pound heifers at \$240/cwt. (\$1344/head). Two sets of four-weight heifers sold for over \$220/cwt. At the Northwest Cattlemen's Association fall replacement sale last week in Woodward, Oklahoma, bred heifers ranged from \$1675-\$2250/head; young to middle-age bred cows ranged from \$1350-\$2500/head; and cow-calf pairs from \$1950-\$3000/pair. Female demand will certainly be as strong, if not stronger, in the spring, once again, assuming that forage conditions continue to look favorable.

## Prepare for a Successful Spring Calving Season

Dave Sparks, DVM, Oklahoma State University Area Extension Veterinarian and Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Someone once said "that Success occurs when Opportunity meets with Preparation". Planning and preparing ahead for next spring's calving season can help increase the chances of success. There are several key preparation steps that would be good to conduct in November or December to insure success in February, March, and April.

**Equipment:** Before calving season starts do a walk-through of pens, chutes, and calving stalls. Make sure that all are clean, dry, strong, safe, and functioning correctly. *This is a lot easier to do on a sunny afternoon than on a cold dark night when you need them.*

**Protocol:** Before calving season starts develop a plan of what to do, when to do it, who to call for help (along with phone numbers), and how to know when you need help. Make sure all family members or helpers are familiar with the plan. It may help to write it out and post copies in convenient places. Talk to the local veterinarian about the protocol and incorporate his/her suggestions. Your veterinarian will be a lot more helpful when you have an emergency during the kids' school program if you have talked a few times during regular hours.

**Supplies:** The stockman should always have in his medicine chest the following: disposable obstetrical sleeves, non-irritant antiseptic, lubricant, obstetrical chains (60 inch and/or two 30 inch chains), two obstetrical handles, mechanical calf pullers, and injectable antibiotics. Many lubricants have been used and one of the best lubricants is probably the simplest – non-detergent soap and warm water. Do not forget the simple things like a good flashlight with extra batteries and some old towels or a roll of paper towels. It may be helpful for you to have all these things and other items you may want to include packed into a 5 or 10 gallon bucket to make up an obstetrical kit so you can grab everything at once.

**Read and Learn:** Study your lesson about preparing for the calving season by downloading and reading the Oklahoma State University Extension Circular called "[Calving Time Management](#)"

[for Beef Cows and Heifers" http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5171/E-1006web.pdf](http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5171/E-1006web.pdf)

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