

Livestock Notes

Profitability Traits in Feedlot Steers

A recent report from the University of Missouri identifies several animal and economic variables that influence profitability for feedlot steers. The trial used data accumulated during five years in a feedlot program.

Animal data included average daily gain, starting weight, frame size, final weight, feed conversion, quality grade, internal carcass fat, dressing percentage, and total feed intake. Economic data included initial steer value, feed cost per head, and lot cost per head. Veterinary, marketing, and fixed costs were assumed to be the same for all the animals.

Variables that correlated well with profit (total carcass value minus all costs) were not usually associated with the animal. The highest correlations with profit were initial value (.47) and quality grade (.40). Those with lower relationships were feed conversion (-.25) and starting weight (-.23). It is also important to note that frame

size was negatively associated with profitability; that is, as frame size increased, profits went down. In fact, this relationship was almost the same as that between average daily gain and profit.

Feedlot operators will often tell you the key to success in feeding cattle is to buy them as cheaply as you can and feed them until they grade Choice. This study certainly confirms that statement.

Implant Comparisons

A recent Iowa State University project investigated the effects of implanting feedlot steers with three types of implants. The treatments included no implants, Revelor implants (a combination of trenbolone acetate and estradiol) at day 0 or day 0 and 80, Synovex at day 0 and/or day 0 and 80, and Synovex at day 0 and Synovex plus Finaplix (trenbolone acetate) at day 80. The objectives were to measure feedlot performance and carcass traits in the steers.

Results showed that all implant strategies improved feedlot performance compared to controls.

Revelor implants at day 0 and 80 and Synovex at day 0 and 80 had similar response in carcass quality with significantly fewer steers grading Choice, but those with the double Revelor implants had faster daily gains and larger ribeye size. A single initial or terminal implant (Revelor at day 0 only or Synovex plus Finaplix at day 80) tended to increase feedlot performance without sacrificing carcass grade.

Implanting steers with trenbolone acetate is currently being heavily researched. Many of the earlier studies have shown that implanting tends to reduce carcass quality while providing greater performance. From this study, it appears that a terminal implant or an initial implant only will give a desirable response. Finaplix and Synovex are available now, but Revelor is not currently available.

Use of growth-promoting implants will consistently be a profitable tool. However, new types of implants should be selected and used to their best advantage for the market that is served.

Using Salt to Limit Intake of Self-Fed Grain & Supplements

The addition of salt to supplemental grains or protein supplements is an effective way to limit intake to a desired level.

For example, beef animals will eat about one tenth of a percent of their body weight daily as salt, so supplements may be mixed with the appropriate amount of salt to reach a desired intake. The following table describes how these mixes may be formulated:

Cattle wt. (lb)	Salt intake (%)	Salt Content of Rations to Control Intake (daily feed intake, lb)							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
400	0.4	29	17	12	9	7	6	5	---
500	0.5	33	20	14	11	9	8	7	6
700	0.7	41	26	19	15	12	10	9	8
1100	1.0	52	35	27	22	18	16	14	13
1400	1.4	58	41	32	26	22	19	17	15

Other management factors when using high-salt rations:

- Have plenty of water continuously available.
- Use plain white salt in grain mixes.
- Use wooden feeders when available.
- Mix small batches of grain-salt mixes at first since cattle will tend to adjust to the salt over a 3-4 week period.
- A rule of thumb is to start at 10 percent salt and adjust it to meet intake needs.



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