



## Beef Briefs

by  
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### INITIAL BACKFAT AFFECTS FEEDLOT PERFORMANCE OF STEERS

A recent research trial at Kansas State University has shown there is a significant difference in the final weight of steers, fed to the same degree of outside fat, that differed in initial backfat thickness.

The study compared three groups of steers which averaged about 650 pounds initial weight, but differed in initial fat thickness by about .1 inch.

They were fed either a growing ration (mostly silage) or were put on full feed.

Their results showed that steers with the highest level of initial fat responded differently to the growing ration than those with less fat. Their final weight at .4 inch of rib fat was 1,100-1,150, while those with medium (.2 inch) and low (.1 inch) of initial fat were 100 and 200 pounds heavier, respectively.

Furthermore, high initial fat was related to lower final weight for steers that were full fed (1,110 pounds vs. 1,163 pounds). Those fed growing diets, and then full fed to finish, required more days on feed since they had lower average daily gains, but the percentage reaching choice quality grade did not differ.

However, those steers fed growing diets before being full fed with .1 to .2 inch of initial fat did not differ in their final weight at .4 inch of

rib fat, compared to steers full fed for the entire period. This implies final weight was not affected by feeding regime to a fat-constant endpoint in this group.

Economics, then, would dictate that feeders should consider a wide range of feeding strategies for feeder steers with low initial backfat. The price of feed energy from several sources, including a growing ration high in forages, would be an important factor for thinner, less conditioned feeder steers.

(Caution: This information failed to show if there was a difference in frame size between the groups. This is important to know in this case because if the group with higher initial fat was fatter because of differences in breed, frame, or maturity (smaller-framed calves of predominately British breeding vs. larger-framed, continental breeds), the differences in final weight would be biased by this factor.)

### Castration Methods

Opinions sometimes differ on the most effective method of castration of beef cattle. While convenience will often play an important role, the most effective method must be the one which completely frees the male calf of secondary, bullish, characteristics.

Secondly, it must be a method which will not reduce the productivity of the calf.

To meet these two criteria, it is obvious the most effective method will be surgical removal of the tes-

ticles. There is then no chance the animal will ever be a bull, and, when done in a timely manner, it will not reduce productivity of the calf.

A recent report from Kansas State University compared surgical castration, the use of rubber bands, and the "EZE" method of castration on both calves and yearlings. The results indicated there will be no reduction in performance of either calves or yearlings by any of the methods.

Therefore, inasmuch as castration may effect stress on the animal, there was no difference in the stress associated with any of the methods. Our own work here at Penn State has shown there was no difference in performance of dairy beef calves castrated at two weeks of age compared to those castrated with rubber bands.

Also, we found the rubber bands will fail, even with the best managers, about 5 percent or more of the time. Rubber bands, then, violate one of the reasons for castration.

Many of you know that I am on a personal vendetta against the use of rubber bands in Pennsylvania in order to improve the value of Pennsylvania feeder calves. Very young calves can be handled easier, there is less stress on the calf, and there is no loss of production when castration is done correctly and at the right time. If a calf is intended to be a steer, make him one early in his life — with a knife.

### Probiotic Trial

A research trial has been initiated here at Penn State to compare direct-fed microbial products (probiotics) for health and production in young (3-8 day old) dairy beef calves.

The trial only recently started, but we have some data to suggest that about 26 percent of the initial 50 calves on test did not receive any colostrum, or had poor colostrum, before being marketed.

The calves were purchased at

Pennsylvania auctions. One of the objectives of the study is to see what effect the lack of colostrum will have on productivity of the calves, and, secondly, what effect

the use of probiotics will be for these calves. The trial should be complete by the end of the year, so I will keep you posted on the results.

## Board Approves Beef Checkoff

DENVER, Colo. — A beef checkoff program plan and budget for fiscal year 1993 was approved by beef producers at the summer meeting of the Beef Promotion and Research Board.

The 111-member board met June 26-29 in Oak Brook, Ill., where the board approved a national checkoff program plan and a \$44 million budget for the year beginning October 1.

Beef board members approved a budget which includes promotion, \$23.49 million; foreign marketing, \$5.0 million; industry information, \$4.5 million; consumer information, \$4.0 million; research, \$3.5 million; administration, \$2.2 million; producer communications, \$510,000; program development, \$500,000; and evaluation, \$300,000.

In other action, a Beef Board Evaluation Committee was organized to oversee the Board's responsibility for program evaluation. Ronnie Holladay, Beef Board chairman said he was pleased with this action. "We've established some parameters by which an evaluation committee will begin working in detail to improve upon our beef checkoff programs."

Holladay said that this is a positive step forward for the beef industry. "I feel this a major step to

begin using evaluation as a tool to set priorities and incorporate them into a comprehensive budgeting process, to use our dollars for the best interests of the producers who pay into the checkoff."

The board also heard the results of its 1992 Producer Attitude Survey. This was a national random sample survey of 2,000 beef producers from across the country. One of the key survey findings was an 80 percent approval rating by producers for the beef checkoff.

Beef Board Chairman Holladay was pleased by the survey results. "This tells us that producers are still very supportive of the checkoff and overall feel that the board is headed in the right direction with checkoff funded programs."

The Beef Board is 111 beef producers and importers (including dairy and veal operators) appointed by and held accountable to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for administering the Beef Promotion and Research Act and Order.

The Beef Board contracts with national nonprofit, industry organizations to implement programs of promotion, research, consumer information, industry information, foreign marketing and producer communications funded by the \$1-per-head checkoff.

## 'Combining' Oysters

(Continued from Page E28)

harbor. The captain put the bow spirit out over the boardwalk, close to a parked van — don't poke in that van window! He steered hard a port, bringing the stern to starboard, then reversed and nudged on the throttle, moving them backward. He pulled on the starboard dinghy rope, bringing the boat further about, then forward again, steered to port, the stern swung around, but not quite enough. Reverse again as he pulled on the starboard rope, then steered to port, a little power forward, and the boat drifted neatly to the dock — dock posts were lassoed and the tour was over.

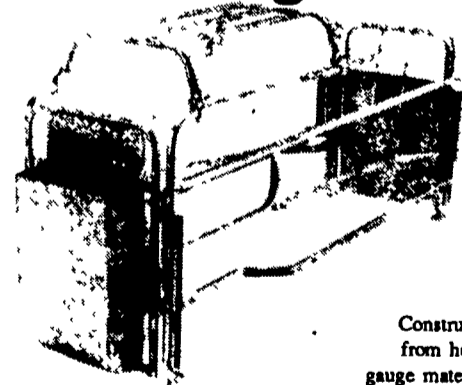
Second mate Saake thanked the passengers for coming. He said, "The Bay Education Office in Har-

risburg has paid a \$500 grant to Lancaster County Extension toward the cost of this tour, therefore, keeping the cost to \$10 each. Now you all have a safe trip home and start to improve your farming methods so as to prevent runoff — like planting more cover crops and using less chemicals."

Editor's Note: This is the first of two articles on the trip to the Chesapeake Bay, written by Sam Stoltzfus, a dairy farmer along the Pequea Creek in Lancaster County. In the next article, Stoltzfus will describe the afternoon visit to the Clagett Demonstration farm owned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

## PREVENT PIGLET CRUSHING

### BSM Model 90 Farrowing Crate



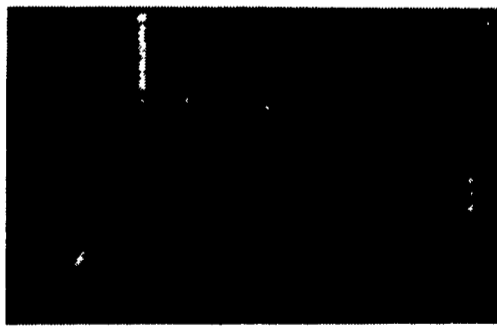
Constructed from heavy gauge materials this crate is designed to reduce crushing, with sow comfort in mind. The

bowled bottom bars makes for a comfortable 33" crate width when the sow lays down, yet the adjustable anti-crush bars eliminates the sow from carelessly dropping in the piglets.

This movement restriction does not hamper the sow as she lays down, or wants to stand up, as the bars slide up and out of her way.

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