

SUMMARY OF THE CULL COW FEEDING PROJECT IN SOUTHWEST IOWA

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With the imminent opening of the IQB harvesting plant in Tama, IA, comes some interest in feeding cull cows. American Foods of Green Bay, WI is the operating partner in the ICA venture and they have a desire to acquire fed cull cows or white fat cows. Recently, a feeding project coordinated by ISU extension was concluded in SW Iowa. Here are the observations:

The type of cow purchased is very important. She must be sound, healthy, open, and in thin to moderate condition. Avoid cows that are too thin and very sucked up. They may be permanently hurt. Also be sure to avoid cows that are devoid of muscling or very flat muscled. The ideal cow to put on feed probably weighs from 1150 to 1275.

Two points to remember in purchasing cows are

1. All commingled cows must have health papers with a permit number from the state veterinarian. Your local veterinarian can call for this number.
2. Cows must be blood tested and have a permanent ID tag (silver metal clip in ear). This is a cost of about \$5 per head.

Following is a list of suggested management practices:

1. Use a vaccination program including 4-way viral and 7-way clostridial.
2. Use a normal 61-63 Mcal finishing diet.
3. Use your normal ionophore program.
4. Start on feed slowly, maybe using 10 days between ration steps.
5. Feed MGA at .5 mg. per head per day.
6. Have 20 to 24 in. of bunk space per head minimum.
7. Use a sound worming and de-licing program.
8. Implant aggressively.

An interesting comment was made by those who had fed these trial cows. It was felt that they needed to charge significantly more yardage to feed cull cows because of:

1. The added bunk space needed which limited the number of cows in a pen.
2. Because of very high intakes, there is more feed to haul to the bunk and more manure to haul away.

The SW Iowa project performance numbers showed gains around 3.7 lbs. per day with feed efficiency of about 10.5:1. The cost of gain is not competitive with feeding steers, the money made was from upgrading the cows from purchase price to sale price. The sale price is very dependent on the quality of the finished cow. The goal is to get as many as possible in the Premium White No. 1 grade. This will take 70 to 90 days on feed. Carcass yields were around 57% basis the shrunk weight at the harvesting plant.