

FACTORS AFFECTING CALF VALUE AND MARKETING TERMINOLOGY USED IN DESCRIBING THEM

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FACTORS AFFECTING CALF VALUE

As you can well imagine, there are many different factors that affect calf value. Some of the factors affect an individual calf's value regardless of when, where or how that calf is marketed. Other factors can influence value at a specific time, location, or method of marketing. Some factors come into play more so when marketing groups than when marketing as individuals. Some of the factors affecting calf value are as follows:

Season	Location
Frame	Sex
Muscle	Castration
Breed	Dehorn
Condition (Flesh)	Health
Lot Size	Uniformity
Weighing Conditions	Shrinkage
Number of Buyers	Sort
Method of Marketing	Weight
Destination	Weight Range
Facilities	Color

Although all factors affect value, some factors obviously have more of an effect on price than do others. Such factors as, season of marketing, weight of calf, frame, muscle, sex, and breed normally have the greatest influence on price. The health of the calves (or anticipated health problems) can also be a large factor in assessing the calf's value. A Kansas study of approximately 150,000 feeder calves sold at auction showed that cattle that were not in good health, had physical impairments, or were muddy, etc., received large discounts (Table 1).

Breed can have a large influence on prices independent of grade. Crossbred calves

normally are in higher demand than straightbred calves, especially straight Hereford or Brahman breeding. We are now starting to see your tall, flatter ribbed type of cattle being penalized (high percentage Simmental, etc.). Calves with a high percentage Dairy, Brahman, and/or Hereford blood are normally penalized as compared to other crossbreed calves of the same quality. Generally, discounts for these breeds can be minimized if the breed represents no more than 25 percent of the calf.

While few cattle sold in Florida and the Southeast are officially graded, prices are reported based on estimated grades. The price differences reported on Florida auctions for various grades provide valuable information into the type cattle demanded in the market and the time to market (Tables 2-5). Remember that the grades are based strictly on frame and muscling, not cattle color. Any breed can produce animals in any of the grades. The source for the information in the tables was the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Livestock and Seed Division, Winter Park, Florida - 1991 Florida Cattle Auctions Report.

MARKETING TERMINOLOGY

Marketing terminology used in describing calves usually starts with the USDA Feeder Calf Grading System and then can add other descriptive terms, such as breed, condition (flesh), etc., and/or regional terms.

USDA Feeder Calf Grades The USDA Feeder Calf Grade specifications classify a calf for both frame size and muscling (thickness score). The specifications are as follows:

- Large Frame (L) - Feeder cattle in this grade are thrifty, have large frames, and are tall and long-bodied for their age. Steers would not be expected to produce the amount of external fat opposite the twelfth rib - usually about .5 inch - normally associated with the U.S. Choice grade until their live weight exceeds 1,200 pounds. Heifers would not be expected to produce Choice carcasses until their live weight exceeds 1,000 pounds.

- Medium Frame (M) - Feeder cattle in this grade are thrifty, have slightly large frames and are slightly tall and long-bodied for their age. Steers would be expected to produce U.S. Choice carcasses (about .5 inch fat at twelfth rib) at live weights of 1,000 to 1,200 pounds. Heifers would be expected to produce Choice carcasses at 850 to 1,000 pounds.

- Small Frame (S) - Feeder cattle included in this grade are thrifty, have small frames, and are shorter-bodied and not as tall as specified as the minimum for the Medium Frame grade. Steers would be expected to produce U.S. Choice carcasses (about .5 inch fat) at live weights of less than 1,000 pounds. Heifers would be expected to produce Choice carcasses at live weights of less than 850 pounds.

- Number 1 - Feeder cattle included in this grade usually show a high proportion of beef breeding. They must be thrifty and slightly thick throughout. They are slightly thick and full in the forearm and gaskin, showing a rounded appearance through the back and loin with moderate width between the legs, both front and rear. Cattle show this thickness with a slightly thin covering of fat; however, cattle eligible for this grade may carry varying degrees of fat.

- Number 2 - Feeder cattle which possess minimum qualifications for this grade are thrifty and narrow through the forequarter and the middle part of the rounds. The forearm and gaskin are thin and the back and loin have a sunken appearance. The legs are set close together, both front and rear. Cattle show this narrowness with a slightly thin covering of fat;

however, cattle eligible for this grade may carry varying degrees of fat.

- Number 3 - Feeder cattle included in this grade are thrifty animals which have less thickness than the minimum requirements specified for the No. 2 grade.

In addition to nine possible combinations (3 frame size, 3 muscle thickness) of feeder grades for thrifty animals, there is an inferior grade for unthrifty animals. The inferior grade includes feeder cattle which are unthrifty because of mismanagement, disease, parasitism, or lack of feed. An animal grading inferior could qualify for a thickness and frame size grade at a later date provided the unthrifty condition was corrected.

Condition Score The condition or amount of flesh that a calf is carrying is also necessary when describing cattle for sale. There can be variations within each category, but the three main ones are:

- Thin Flesh - cattle that are carrying no or very little fat.

- Medium Flesh - carrying some fat.

- Heavy Flesh - starting to lay down quite a bit of condition.

Cattle might be described as Green - fairly thin flesh or Average - medium flesh.

Other Terminology

- Choice #1 Okies or #1 Okie (very seldom talk about choice) - predominately Hereford, Angus or black baldy or out of English bred type of cows. Can get a few exotic cross calves in a group. The number refers to thickness (muscling). Some people are starting to call them Okie 1, Large Frame, Medium Frame, or Small Frame.

- No. 1 English - straightbred English breeds, i.e., Angus, Hereford, Poll Hereford, Shorthorn, etc.

- Choice English X - crossbred English bred calves.

- Choice Exotic - a high percentage or all exotic bred cattle, i.e., Charolais, Limousin, Simmental, etc.

- No. 1 Exotic X - crossbred exotic bred cattle.
- No. 1 X Bred - Brahman crossbred with 25% or less Brahman breeding. They are shapely (adequate muscling) with a "tick" (or touch) of ear. Generally your Brangus, Beefmaster, Braford, etc., type of breeding.
- No. 2 X Bred - Brahman crossbred going up to 1/2 blood.
- No. 3 X Bred - Brahman crossbred (1/2 blood) to straight Brahman. Cattle that exhibit big ear, fine bone, hump, etc.
- No. 1 1/2 or No. 2 - Cattle that are narrower, plainer, and/or of finer bone than your No. 1 cattle.
- No. 1 1/2 Okie or 1 1/2 Exotic X, etc. - thinner cattle carrying less body condition, normally due to inadequate nutrition. These cattle will usually upgrade into the No. 1 category after proper care. Can get into this

grade because cattle are carrying dairy breeding.

-No. 2 - These are your lighter muscled (narrower), plainer cattle. These can be both of beef breeding or dairy percentage cattle. Number 2s will not upgrade!

- No. 3 - Normally this classification is reserved for your dead or dying cattle, extremely narrow type of cattle. Jerseys would fall into this thickness description.

There are many different, or variations thereof, terms when talking about cattle. The same term can mean different things in different parts of the country. When in doubt, ask. Never buy or sell cattle unless the full description is thoroughly understood.

Understand the factors that affect calf value and improve those under your control. Improved marketing starts with improved management.

Table 1. Factors Affecting Calf Value and Discounts Received (Kansas)	
Factors	Discounts
Sick (.1%)	\$18-24/cwt
Lameness	10-17/cwt
Lumps	10-17/cwt
Runny Eyes	4-6/cwt
Nasal Discharge	4-6/cwt
Muddy (21%)	1-2/cwt
Horns	.50/cwt
Breed	2-13/cwt

Table 2. Grade and Season Price Differences, 200-400 lb Steers (Averages)		
	Season (Price and Month)	
Grade	High	Low
Medium Frame, #1	141.97 Apr	110.12 Dec
Large Frame, #1	140.25 Apr	106.05 Nov
Small Frame, #1	127.47 Apr	94.12 Dec
Med. & Lg. Frame, #2	115.31 Jun	99.98 Nov
	114.31 Apr	
Medium Frame, #2	127.78 Apr	99.25 Dec

Table 3. Grade and Season Price Differences, 400-600 lb Steers (Averages)		
	Season (Price and Month)	
Grade	High	Low
Medium Frame, #1	105.00 Apr	83.00 Dec
Large Frame, #1	104.26 Apr	81.30 Nov
Small Frame, #1	94.92 Jun	75.01 Nov
	94.22 Apr	
Med. & Lg. Frame, #2	92.00 May	79.01 Nov
Medium Frame, #2	96.25 Apr	76.88 Dec

Table 4. Grade and Season Price Differences, 200-400 lb Heifers (Averages)		
	Season (Price and Month)	
Grade	High	Low
Medium Frame, #1	123.44 Apr	97.31 Nov
Large Frame, #1	119.60 Apr	90.83 Dec
Small Frame, #1	108.87 Apr	81.25 Dec
Medium Frame, #2	111.53 Apr	86.18 Dec

Table 5. Grade and Season Price Differences, 400-600 lb Heifers (Averages)

Grade	Season (Price and Month)	
	High	Low
Medium Frame, #1	96.69 Apr	76.00 Dec
Large Frame, #1	94.06 Mar	80.13 Nov
Small Frame, #1	87.07 Apr	69.50 Dec
Medium Frame, #2	88.09 Apr	73.00 Dec