

# Marketing Task Force Report

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Two years ago, the FCA Marketing Committee put together its "Pasture to Plate" program. This allowed participating producers to acquire health, production and carcass information on a sampling of their cattle in a commercial feedlot. This information helped these cattlemen make needed changes in their management programs to increase the quality of these calves.

Approximately one year ago, the FCA Board of Directors asked the Marketing Committee to find additional ways to help improve the marketability, quality and reputation of Florida calves - especially calves from small to mid-size cattle operations.

Our initial response was a special feeder calf sale, where calves met certain health and production qualifications. In November of 1993, a task force of individuals from the Department of Agriculture, IFAS and FCA members toured several southeast states to gain first hand information on how these states handled these special feeder calf sales. A questionnaire was also mailed to as many FCA members as possible to let them rate the different criteria we thought a quality feeder calf should have.

In January of 1994, a task force of state veterinarians, IFAS members, order buyers, cattle producers and FCA members met to discuss the feasibility of a special feeder calf sale. We left this meeting with some questions answered, but more questions unanswered and more problems to solve.

After a couple of phone calls and another task force meeting in March, we decided what we really needed first was not a feeder calf sale, but a replacement heifer sale.

On our fact finding trip the previous November, we visited some people in Chilton County, Alabama about their replacement heifer sale. In the past 13 years, these heifers have averaged from \$70 to \$225 above market value.

The more we thought about this, the better it looked. This would involve and benefit all sizes of operations. Not only would it be an outlet for

surplus replacement quality heifers from large outfits, but would provide quality heifers for small to mid-size operations who need quick genetic progress or want to use a terminal cross. A quality feedlot calf could be produced more quickly.

With this in mind, the task force has proposed a joint venture replacement heifer sale involving the FCA, IFAS and the Livestock Marketing Association in the fall of 1995.

Prior to this, IFAS and our county extension agents will have a series of educational seminars to define the type of heifers needed. These will be directed at educating both buyer and seller.

Heifers must be consigned by the original owners and meet specific health requirements and production standards. Heifers will also be screened visually by a committee of producers, IFAS personnel and a veterinarian. Consignees must be FCA members.

A small consignment fee will be placed on each heifer in the sale, to help cover travel expenses of the screening committee and advertisement costs. A % commission will also go the Livestock Market, which helps promote the sale.

Lot sizes will be from 3-5 uniform head, sold in a Roll Type sale. This will allow buyers

to purchase small or large groups of heifers and shorten the length of the sale.

Although this replacement heifer sale is strictly a proposal by the task force, we feel it has great potential to enhance the value of our surplus replacement heifers and at the same time provide a source of quality replacements for rapid genetic improvement.

The members of the task force strongly encourage you to give your comments to the FCA Executive Committee members, your Livestock Market managers, IFAS personnel and Extension Agents.