

Cow Country Reporter



September 2025 Volume 17 Issue 9

News from your CEO

In This Issue

News from your CEO

Less cattle in U.S. feedlots; more cattle in Canada and Australia

Information Asymmetry in Cattle Marketing

How Much Meat Will the U.S. Eat in 2025 and 2026?

Managing the details

Study finds animal protein may reduce cancer mortality



Cattle Producers Of Louisiana
P.O. Box 886
Prairieville, Louisiana 70769
Website: www.lacattle.org

Dave Foster
Chief Executive Officer
fostercrrib2@gmail.com
225-335-3345

There is one word that fully describes the cattle market: HIGHER! Who would have thought that according to USDA, The National Weekly Feeder and Stocker Summary for the week ending August 23, 2025, showed 400-700 lbs. steers bringing \$650.00-\$700.00 per head more than the same time a year ago in the Southeast region. Many are saying the market will go higher. Again, PLEASE don't get caught with a cow herd that has an average age of over 10 years.

Demand for calves to go to grass and/or wheat to graze is good to very

good. Remember, the feeding sector is feeding cattle to heavier weights, (1500-1800 lbs.) so calves weighting 700-900 lbs. are being purchased to go into a grazing program. The August 1, 2025, Cattle on Feed report showed a 2% decrease on feed and in July a 6% decrease in placements and marketings. Less cattle lends itself to higher prices. Get your cow herd younger, pay off those loans and reduce your debt. Enjoy the Fall season and bask in the glow of this higher market. Y'all deserve it!

Dave Foster, CEO

LESS CATTLE IN U.S. FEEDLOTS; MORE CATTLE IN CANADA AND AUSTRALIA

By: Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

The latest USDA-NASS Cattle on Feed report shows August 1 feedlot inventories at 10.922 million head, down 1.6 percent year over year. This is the eighth consecutive smaller monthly inventory and is the smallest monthly feedlot total since October 2017 (Figure 1). The 12-month moving average of feedlot inventories, which removes seasonality and shows general trends, dropped in August to the lowest level since March 2019.

July feedlot placements were slightly larger than expected, likely reflecting early sales of "fall-run" calves in response to ever-higher feeder cattle prices. Feeder cattle volumes in Oklahoma auctions are up 27.2 percent year over year in the past six weeks. Higher than expected placements occurred despite the lack of Mexican cattle imports. Texas placements were down 25 percent year over year; a 95,000 head reduction compared to one year ago. Total feedlot placements in July were down 104,000 head, meaning that the decrease in Texas accounts for over 91 percent of the total decline in monthly placements. July feedlot marketings were about as expected at 94 percent of last year.

The latest release of monthly livestock slaughter from USDA-NASS shows that beef production in July was down 4.5 percent year over year, contributing to a year-to-date decrease of 2.7 percent for the first seven months of 2025. Total cattle slaughter thus far in 2025 is down 5.8 percent, including a 4.2 percent decrease in fed (steer + heifer) slaughter and a 12.5 percent decrease in cow slaughter for the first seven months of the year.

Canada Update

The Canadian statistical agency, Statistics Canada, released July livestock inventories last week. The total cattle inventory is 11.9 million head, up 0.8 percent and the first increase since 2021. After declining for several years, the beef cow herd in Canada increased by 0.4 percent and beef replacement heifers were up 2.0 percent year over year. It appears that some herd rebuilding is beginning in Canada. Cattle on-feed in Alberta and Saskatchewan for August 1 are down 0.4 percent year over year at 777 thousand head.

Australia Too!

Cattle inventories in Australia have been increasing since 2021 to current levels just over 27 million head. The latest quarterly reports show cattle on feed in Australia at a new record level of 1.6 million head. Cattle feeding in Australia has increased four-fold in the past 30 years and continues to grow. Grain-fed beef currently accounts for 29 percent of total beef exports from Australia.

INFORMATION ASYMMETRY IN CATTLE MARKETING

By: Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

Information asymmetry refers to a situation where one party in a transaction has more or better information than the other. When one party has more relevant, up-to-date, or detailed information it can lead to potential exploitation and unfair pricing. The less informed party may make poor decisions leading to negative outcomes. In the case of marketing cattle, the less informed party may not be willing to bid or pay fair value as a result of lack of information.

The commercial cow-calf operation serves as the initial source of product in the segmented chain of beef production. In conventional beef production weaned calves will become stockers, then go through a feedlot operation and fed to a compositional endpoint, at which time they be harvested and turned into the product of beef. Your weaned calves will likely have multiple owners and be 18 – 24 months of age by the time they are beef, the product.

When marketing your weaned calves, have you ever felt at a disadvantage? Are you able to document your investment in genetics and management practices that give your calves additional value to the next owner? Can you show evidence that calves have been vaccinated, have a functional immune system, are likely to remain healthy, grow and gain efficiently through the next phases of production, and ultimately yield a carcass of value that meets consumer demand?

Documentation of health status resulting from a sound pre-weaning vaccination program has become the industry standard in marketing calves. Even in the short supplied, robust market we currently enjoy, the backgrounded, long-weaned calves sell for more than bawling, fresh weaned calves. Considering what has value to the next owner, this is logical.

With regard to the genetic potential of calves for post-weaning performance through the stocker and finishing phases of production it also makes sense that the next owners would be willing to pay more for calves with documented superior genetic potential for more gain, better cost of gain, more carcass weight, more red meat yield and especially; more carcass quality. So how is this documentation achieved?

Historically, Genomic companies and breed associations offer genetic tests for commercial cattle that many commercial producers have used to understand the genetic makeup of their herds. This information can be valuable when selecting replacement heifers (maternal traits) and for marketing steers (growth and carcass traits). The sampling process is similar for seedstock or commercial operations. Typically a blood sample (or tail hair with root bulbs) is submitted for testing. After DNA from the sample has been analyzed a scorecard for calves will be received with a rating of genetic potential.

More recently, the Genetic Merit Scorecard (GMS) from the American Angus Association has been made available. The GMS has the advantage of projecting the performance potential from weaning to carcass based on the genetic values of the registered Angus sires. Accordingly, the GMS does not require any tissue sample to be submitted from calves. Starting in August 2024, producers earned premiums on the U.S. Premium Beef, LLC (USPB) Kansas grid based on the genetic merit of their cattle. The marketplace has responded to having an objective, reliable way to describe the genetic merit in a pen of feeder cattle by paying out significant premiums. To qualify for the GMS, calves' sires must be predominantly Angus and 75% of the bull battery must be registered Angus sires. More information on the GMS and enrolling calves is available at the third link referenced at the end of this article.

Longer term solutions include retaining (at least partial) ownership of calves through the stocker and finishing phase. Planning and coordinating retained ownership so that performance data on health, growth and carcass merit is made available and flows back to the cow-calf operation is a critically important step in building a reputation for your operation and the calves you produce.

References:

Genetics in the Genomics Era. Chapter 28. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Beef Cattle Manual. Eighth Edition.

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/genomic-testing-and-its-uses-in-beef-cattle>

<https://www.angus.org/anguslink/genetic-merit-scorecard#:~:text=What%20are%20GMS%20scores?,others%20offered%20through%20IMI%20Global>

HOW MUCH MEAT WILL THE U.S. EAT IN 2025 AND 2026?

Per capita availability of red meat and poultry is projected higher in 2025 and 2026.

By: Jennifer Shike

Domestic availability of red meat, poultry and eggs is projected to increase in 2025, driven by gains in chicken and pork availability, and is expected to rise further in 2026, reports the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). This increase stems from USDA's forecast of per capita supply available for use on the domestic market.

How are these numbers determined? ERS says availability, also known as disappearance, serves as a proxy for consumption and includes fresh and processed meat and eggs sold through grocery stores and used in restaurants.

"The latest USDA data indicate 226 lb. of red meat and poultry and about 22 dozen eggs are available per U.S. consumer in 2025. By 2026, per capita availability is forecast to increase to 227 lb. for red meat and poultry and to 23 dozen eggs," ERS reports.

Data for 2025 and 2026 are forecasts. Per capita meat availability serves as a proxy for consumption and does not reflect indirect uses, such as pet food or food waste.

Chicken Projected to Be Most Consumed Animal Product

For chicken, per capita availability of broiler meat has been growing for many years and is projected to reach 102.7 lb. in 2025 and 102.8 lb. in 2026, ERS says. This will make it the most consumed animal product in the U.S.

However, availability of turkey has been falling in recent years and is projected to reach a low of 13.0 lb. per person in 2025 but increase to 13.6 lb. in 2026.

Per capita table egg availability for 2025 is projected at 21.5 dozen and is projected to increase to 22.9 dozen per person in 2026.

Pork and Beef Projections

ERS reports that pork availability per capita is projected at 49.7 lb. in 2025 and 50.9 lb. in 2026, up from 49.9 lb. in 2024.

Meanwhile, per capita beef availability for 2025 is projected to be slightly lower than 2024 at 58.5 lb., but is projected to decrease further to 56.9 lb. per person in 2026.

MANAGING THE DETAILS

Getting the little things right.

By: University of Kentucky, Kevin Laurent, Extension Specialist, Department of Animal and Food Sciences, University of Kentucky

Back in the 1980s, one of the stockyards in Baton Rouge, where we sold our hogs, had a statement on their check stubs that read, "A man with a paid off cow herd is never really broke." That simple statement always intrigued me. Given the current market, it seems like a huge understatement, but I think the wisdom of that simple statement can be applied no matter what stage of the cattle cycle we are in. These historical prices provide an incredible opportunity to pay down debt, improve infrastructure, or maybe even expand. Regardless of how we choose to use this added revenue, we need to be cautious about becoming complacent in our day-to-day management. Good managers pay attention to detail, and an excellent example can be found in data gathered from the Advanced Post Weaning Value-Added Program (PVAP).

The Advanced PVAP program targets producers who have routinely weaned and preconditioned their calves prior to marketing, with the objective of not only evaluating the economics of preconditioning but also identifying the best management practices of these experienced producers. The chart above is a summary of 52 closeouts from 42 producers that have participated in the Advanced PVAP program to date. As you can see, the 1645 calves in this summary were fed an average of 79 days postweaning, gained an additional 182 pounds, and sold for \$7.91 per cwt. over the state average, and netted \$221.10 per head over selling at weaning. This type of on farm data is invaluable not only for producers but also aids extension educators for more effective program planning and recommendations.

To gain even more insight into actual management practices, a survey of the PVAP participants was conducted. Of the 42 producers represented in this database, 41 responded to the survey. Some of the interesting highlights of this survey are as follows:

- 61% used fence line weaning
- 73% introduced concentrate feed prior to weaning, either by creep feeding or limited hand feeding
- 78% castrated calves prior to 3 months of age
- 71% implanted their steers
- 78% sold their calves in some type of special preconditioned sale
- 53% fed an ionophore such as Rumensin or Bovatec in either the mineral or feed
- 49% plan to review their management practices based on closeout results

A deeper dive into the database yielded more information on two of the practices highlighted. The first of these showed that how producers marketed their calves affected price received relative to the state average price. Calves selling in special preconditioned sales averaged \$9.46 per cwt over the state average. Calves selling in non-preconditioned sales and/or private treaty averaged \$3.25 per cwt over the state average. A difference of \$6.21 per cwt.

Another interesting find was the effect that time of castration had on steer average daily gain during the postweaning period. Steers castrated at or near weaning had average daily gains of only .08 pounds more than their heifer mates (2.23 vs. 2.15), whereas steers castrated prior to 3 months of age gained .39 pounds more than their heifer mates (2.49 vs. 2.10). Although not a controlled study, I think we can safely say that the early castrated calves had a weight gain advantage due to less stress at weaning. A conservative assumption of an added .30 pound per day in this example could possibly result in an extra 20-25 pounds per head, which in today's market could be an additional \$70-90 per head.

An additional indicator of the level of management by the 41 producers in the survey was the morbidity and mortality rate among the 1645 calves. Sickness was reported in only 32 calves (1.95% morbidity). Of these 32 calves, 28 were on the same farm that must comingle calves into one central weaning facility from several different herds. Death loss for the 1645 calves totaled 4 head for a mortality rate of 0.24%. It should be noted that 2 of these calves were from operations that castrate at weaning. The extremely low rate of mortality and morbidity among these 52 different groups of calves further reinforces the argument that the best place for a calf to be castrated and weaned is on the farm where it was born.

Although all the practices highlighted by the survey cannot necessarily be quantified in dollars and cents, given the lack of controlled comparisons in this dataset, most of these areas of management have sound economic justification. Most participants in the Advanced PVAP program are embracing these practices to ensure that the calves are ready to transition and thrive at weaning, thereby minimizing production risks. But what about market risk? Maybe the next detail our PVAP producers should consider is purchasing Livestock Risk Protection (LRP), especially as we go forward in this extremely high and volatile market.

This is just one example of how managing the details can pay dividends when preconditioning and marketing our calves. I think we would all agree that paying attention to detail and getting the little things right can apply to all areas of management and position our operations for the future. Maybe we can edit that old stockyard check stub to read "A person who manages the details and has a paid off cow herd will be ready to ride the next turn of the cattle cycle."



This could be your last issue if your dues have not been paid. Please call us to check your membership status if you are not sure. Your support means we can continue to work for you.

STUDY FINDS ANIMAL PROTEIN MAY REDUCE CANCER MORTALITY

Research shows no associations between total protein, animal or plant, and risk of death from any cause, cardiovascular disease or cancer.

Industry Release

Eating animal-sourced protein foods is not linked to a higher risk of death and may even offer protective benefits against cancer-related mortality, new research finds.

The study, published in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism*, analyzed data from nearly 16,000 adults ages 19 and older using the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Researchers examined how much animal and plant protein people typically consume and whether those patterns were associated with their risk of dying from heart disease, cancer or any cause.

They found no increased risk of death associated with higher intake of animal protein. In fact, the data showed a modest but significant reduction in cancer-related mortality among those who ate more animal protein.

"There's a lot of confusion around protein – how much to eat, what kind and what it means for long-term health. This study adds clarity, which is important for anyone trying to make informed, evidence-based decisions about what they eat," explains Stuart Phillips, professor and chair of the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster University who supervised the research.

To ensure reliable results, the team employed advanced statistical methods, including the National Cancer Institute method and multivariate Markov Chain Monte Carlo modelling, to estimate long-term dietary intake and minimize measurement error.

"It was imperative that our analysis used the most rigorous, gold standard methods to assess usual intake and mortality risk. These methods allowed us to account for fluctuations in daily protein intake and provide a more accurate picture of long-term eating habits," says Phillips.

The researchers found no associations between total protein, animal protein or plant protein and risk of death from any cause, cardiovascular disease, or cancer. When both plant and animal protein were included in the analysis, the results remained consistent, suggesting that plant protein has a minimal impact on cancer mortality, while animal protein may offer a small protective effect.

Observational studies like this one cannot prove cause and effect; however, they are valuable for identifying patterns and associations in large populations. Combined with decades of clinical trial evidence, the findings support the inclusion of animal proteins as part of a healthy dietary pattern.

"When both observational data like this and clinical research are considered, it's clear both animal and plant protein foods promote health and longevity," says lead researcher Yanni Papanikolaou, MPH, president, Nutritional Strategies.

This research was funded by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff. NCBA was not involved in the study design, data collection and analysis or publication of the findings.

CATTLE PRODUCERS OF LOUISIANA
P.O. BOX 886
PRAIRIEVILLE, LOUISIANA 70769
WEBSITE: WWW.LACATTLE.ORG