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EC70-226 Nebraska Commercial Beef Herd Evaluation Program

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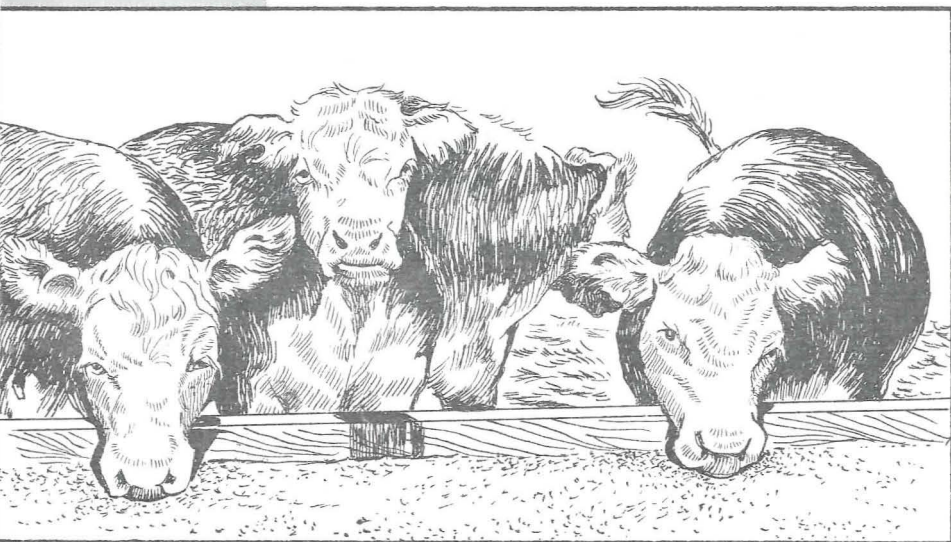
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NEBRASKA COMMERCIAL BEEF HERD EVALUATION PROGRAM



EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
COOPERATING WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND THE COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS
E. F. FROLIK, DEAN J. L. ADAMS, DIRECTOR

NEBRASKA COMMERCIAL BEEF HERD EVALUATION PROGRAM

Robert H. Hatch¹

OBJECTIVE

The Nebraska Commercial Beef Herd Evaluation Program is designed for commercial cattlemen. Its purpose is to obtain detailed growth and carcass information on a random sample of individual animals.

This information will help consignors to better evaluate their breeding and selection programs. It will encourage the production of beef cattle with superior genetic potential for feedlot performance and carcass merit. The information may also be used by consignors or by marketing organizations in the promotion of Nebraska feeder cattle.

The program is designed to serve both major alternative marketing procedures common to most Nebraska commercial ranch operations:

1. The sale of weanling calves.
2. The sale of yearlings.

Therefore, either weanling calves or yearlings may be entered in the program.

ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAM

Interested cattlemen should contact their County Extension Agent for details concerning enrollment. He will have the latest information concerning the cooperating feedlots.

HERD SAMPLING PROCEDURE

To obtain a representative sample, it is suggested that a minimum of 5% of the calf crop, or 10 head, whichever is larger, be consigned. It is important that a representative herd sample be consigned so that the results will reflect more accurate estimates of growth and carcass merit.

A random sample is a selection method based on the assumption that each animal has an equal opportunity of being chosen. For example, if each animal were assigned a number and all numbers placed in a hat and drawn at random, then each animal would have an equal chance of being chosen. A "gate-cut" serves essentially the same function.

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ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION PROGRAMS

Weanling Calf Program

A representative sample of steer calves from the current year's calf crop is eligible to participate in accordance with the following procedures:

1. A consignment of 10 head, or 5% of the total calf crop, whichever is larger.
2. All calves must be weaned at least 7 days prior to entering the feedlot. Steer calves should be castrated and dehorned so that complete recovery occurs before delivery.
3. An adjustment period of 28 days will be allowed after delivery to the feedlot. At the end of this period calves will be individually weighed and placed on a growing ration until they reach an average weight of about 650 pounds. They will then be placed on a finishing ration until they reach desirable market weight. Individual weights will be obtained at the completion of the growing and finishing phase.
4. There are no weight limits or restrictions involved when consigning calves to this program. They should represent the average of each participating herd.

Yearling Program

The same sampling techniques as outlined in the weanling calf program apply to the yearling program. In addition, the following procedures will also apply:

1. Yearling steers entered in this program should be from the previous year's calf crop and should not exceed 20 months of age.
2. Yearling cattle will be allowed a 14-day adjustment period after arrival at the feedlot. After this period, individual weights will be obtained and the cattle placed on a finishing ration as soon as possible and fed to acceptable market weight.

GENERAL FEEDLOT AND PROGRAM PROCEDURE

1. Upon arrival at the feedlot, all animals will be individually identified. All consigned cattle should carry individual ownership brands.
2. All cattle will be vaccinated consistent with good animal health and existing feedlot management practices. To prevent duplication of current vaccination or herd health practices, a herd health history should accompany each consignment at the time of delivery.
3. As some cattle will reach market weight and grade earlier than others, growth rate will be computed to the time the first cattle are marketed.
4. The consignor maintains ownership of the cattle and pays all expenses associated with the feeding and management of the cattle. He will also receive all proceeds accrued from the sale of his cattle.

5. Feeding costs and associated charges are made at the discretion of the cooperating feedlot. Depending upon the disposition of feeding charges, an entry fee may be assessed on each animal, payable at the time of arrival at the feedlot. This fee will be applied to individual billing charges or returned to the consignor, depending on the method of billing used.

6. Only animals that are disabled by a chronic illness or injury are eligible for removal from the feeding program during the test period.

7. All cattle will be marketed through a cooperating packing company, where prior arrangements have been made concerning the collection of complete carcass data on all individuals. The method of marketing will be determined by a committee of consignors at each cooperating feedlot.

COLLECTION OF CARCASS INFORMATION

Detailed carcass data will be obtained on each individual animal. During the initial years this responsibility will lie with the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service, working with Federal Meat Graders. In the future, this responsibility may rest solely with the U.S.D.A. Meat Grading Service.

Data collected on each individual carcass will include quality grade, fat thickness, rib eye area, estimated percentage of internal fat (kidney, pelvic and heart) and carcass weight. The percent of closely trimmed, boneless retail cuts (cutability) will be calculated.

INTERPRETATION OF TEST DATA

If herd sampling is truly random and the testing procedures are accurate, the data gathered will be about equal to an average of all animals in a calf crop. Participation in this program is recommended for at least two consecutive years to provide realistic and dependable data. After the initial period of participation, herds should be sampled on alternate years, particularly if major changes in bull batteries are made.

The information collected on each individual consignment may be released publicly, using a consignor code system.

ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

A committee composed of consignors and Extension personnel will be formed at each feeding location to meet the administrative and supervisory needs of the program.

NEBRASKA COMMERCIAL BEEF HERD EVALUATION PROGRAM

Consignor: _____ Address: _____ Year of Participation: _____

Location: _____ Number of Cattle: _____ Breed: _____

[illegible]

¹Low, average and high choice = 12, 13 and 14, respectively.