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Cull Cow Marketing and Early Weaning

Over the last 10 years, cull cow prices have been lower every year in November than in late August-early September in the western Nebraska-eastern Wyoming market. In some years, prices have declined as much as \$7 per cwt. over this time frame and the average decline has been about \$4 per cwt. On a 1200 pound cow, that is a decrease in revenue of about \$50 per cow.

The persistent drought in much of Nebraska and Kansas is placing a reducing feed availability on many pastures. Weaning now and selling all cows that will be culled will not only reduce pressure on scarce grazing resources, but will likely increase the revenue received for the cull cows. Prices for the cows will likely be higher now than in November. The cows also will likely loose body condition and weight between now and November, unless the cows are supplemented with additional feed resources.

Weaning calves now should not create any major health challenges for the calves. In fact, weather is less variable now than in October and November when most producers typically wean. However, the weaned calves will be 75-100 pounds lighter. Even with higher prices, net revenue is generally reduced if these lighter calves are sold. Cow-calf producers need to examine their own feed resources and evaluate the cost of purchased feeds to determine if net revenue can be enhanced by feeding early weaned calves an addition 45 to 100 days before marketing them.

The Markets

WOW! It appears that packers got into the spirit of county fair premium auctions and offered a few premiums of their own this week. Slaughter cattle prices were sharply higher in the southern plains, with the bulk of the trade occurring at \$80-81. Prices were \$2-3 higher in the north with slaughter cattle prices at \$128-131 dressed. Choice boxed beef prices were lower for the week and the Choice -Select spread increased. Feeder cattle trade in Kansas was not reported for the 4-market summary. Nebraska feeder markets were \$3-4 higher than for previously reported prices. The volume of feeders is starting to increase as well.

	Last Week	Previous Week	Last Year
Kansas Fed Steer Price, live weight (35-65% Choice)	\$80.88	\$78.15	\$64.47
Neb. Fed Steer Price, dressed weight (35-65% Choice)	\$129.59	\$127.68	\$101.97
700-800 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Kansas 4 market average	NA	\$95.72	\$81.47
500-600 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Kansas 4 market average	NA	\$103.50	\$88.96
700-800 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Neb. 7 market average	\$100.19	NA	\$85.07
500-600 lb. Feeder Steer Price, Neb. 7 market average	\$111.57	NA	\$94.59
Choice Boxed Beef Price, 600-750 lb. carcass	\$138.51	\$140.46	\$112.20
Choice-Select Spread, 600-750 lb. carcass	\$10.01	\$8.57	\$7.29