



CATTLE FEEDING COUNTRY

~ No Better Place to Feed? ~

Cattle Feeding Country of Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico has long been the first choice as a place to feed cattle. Here's why.

BY LARRY STALCUP

FROM THE PEOPLE who care for your cattle to the ultimate climate for peak fed cattle performance, there is no better place to feed than TCFA Cattle Feeding Country.

With nearly 200 TCFA Member Feedyards from which to choose, the Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico area is a cattle feeding mecca that has file after file of performance data that illustrates the advantages of trusting your cattle to one of those yards.

Consistency in the weather, access to major packers and other markets, availability of excellent feeder cattle, rivers of free flowing feed grains and other feedstuffs, and the vast experience of feedyard personnel make Cattle Feeding Country No. 1. Those are the reasons why some 30% of the nation's fed beef supply—or about 7 million fed cattle—are finished in the TCFA area annually.

PANHANDLE AREA

The area's climate is well-suited to people and cattle alike. It's not too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry. The cli-

mate is what helped establish the region as the cattle feeding capital of the world. In the northwest Texas, western Oklahoma and eastern New Mexico area, winter conditions are normally moderate, with an occasional snowfall. The low humidity and moderate winds help keep even the warmest of summer days comfortable for virtually any breed of cattle, from English types to those with Brahman influence.

The average high for December, January and February is about 50 degrees F, meaning any cold snaps are usually short lived. Springtime highs average about 70. With rainfall at about 1" per month in March and April, cattle face few, if any mud problems in well-contoured pens. Low humidity in the summer makes July and August evenings just as comfortable for cattle as they are for people enjoying mild conditions.

"This is an ideal climate for feeding cattle," says TCFA Chairman-Elect Charlie Sellers, a producer, feeder and order buyer based in Amarillo. "I have fed cattle all over and if I am going to

feed a crossbred animal, I am going to feed in the TCFA area."

SOUTH TEXAS

Even in central and southern Texas feeding realms, average temperatures only surpass the 90-degree range in summer months. Average summer lows are about 75. South Texas winters rarely see temperatures dip much below freezing. Only one month, January, sees an average low temperature below 40 degrees. Although the area receives more rainfall than the High Plains, average monthly totals only top 3" four months of the year. Relative humidity is lower than one might think, averaging below 40% in the summer and 50 to 55% the rest of the year.

TCFA Chairman Ernie Morales, who operates a feedyard in South Texas at Devine, notes with that region's warmer climate, there are additional reasons for feeders to choose the area's location for their cattle. "We offer different opportunities for feeders," he says. "Our climate enables us to feed year 'round the types of cattle that can

also be marketed in Mexico as well as across the U.S.”

AREA WIDE

The climate in Cattle Feeding Country helps generate average daily gains that push 2.8 to 3 lbs. or more per day. Average feed conversion rates are about 7-1.

These figures don't happen by accident. Strong performances are propelled by the finest rations available for your particular type of cattle. Whether it is corn or grain sorghum grown by neighboring farmers, or trucked or railed in from other major grain producing areas, there is a constant supply of high quality feed grain for all TCFA member yards. Thanks to the large volume of grain, supplements and other feedstuffs, feed costs are held to a minimum and are as competitive as any across the nation.

Whether you feed your own cattle or are looking to buy calves or yearlings to go on feed, there is a plentiful supply of feeder cattle across Cattle Feeding Country. Texas, the nation's No. 1 cattle producing state, and Oklahoma

straighten out calves and prepare them for the feedyard.

The availability of financing for cattle and feed is another major asset for Cattle Feeding Country. “We have tremendous lending institutions here that understand cattle feeding better than anywhere in the nation,” says Sellers. “Feedyards can partner with their customers and also have excellent financing programs.”

TCFA member feedyards work directly with consulting animal nutritionists and veterinarians to assure that rations and supplemental animal health products are appropriately prescribed for each pen of cattle. These experts know how virtually any type of animal will perform, depending on its origin and background, and work with feedyard managers and others to maximize performance goals.

Feedyard owners, managers and their staffs consist of professionals who are dedicated to the industry. Many of them have grown up in Cattle Feeding Country and are second and even third generation members of feedyard operations. From the people who read bunks

and ride pens, to mill operators and office personnel, there are none better in the industry.

Here are some other good reasons to feed in Cattle Feeding Country:

Feeder Flexibility—With the large number of TCFA member yards, feeder customers have better opportunities to select a yard that meets its particular needs. “TCFA Feedyard Members understand the type of cattle we produce in Texas and this

dous amount of capable people in TCFA area, from owners and managers to pen riders. These are people all of us live and die with. Our feedyard staffs work well with all types of customers, as well as with all types of cattle.”

The excellent climate and feeding conditions, high quality rations, and attention to detail offered by feedyard personnel translates into steers and heifers that perform to their fullest potential. That enables TCFA yards to obtain the greatest return on investment for your cattle.

Feedyard managers and other personnel are in contact with all four major packers—Tyson Fresh Meats, Excel, Swift and National, as well as smaller or specialized beef processors.

The TCFA Market Department, through its M-Net network and other communications sources, give feedyard operators an up-to-the-minute reading of packer bids. If your cattle are ready to sell, the manager or a member of his staff will notify you of the best possible price. If requested, feedyard personnel will often help feeders developed a risk management program for price protection.

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and New Mexico have some of the finest commercial cow herds in the nation. Hundreds of thousands of winter wheat acres are devoted to grazing cattle from late fall to early spring. Other parts of the region offer year 'round grazing on warm and cool season grasses. In addition, there are grower/backgrounding operations across the three states that can help

and ride pens, to mill operators and office personnel, there are none better in the industry.

“People who operate and work at TCFA feedyards are people who think livestock. They think about cattle,” says Sellers. “They have learned how to feed cattle in this area and get the most out of them at all times of the year.”

Adds Morales, “There are a tremen-

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region (along with those from other production areas)," says Ron Gill, beef cattle specialist for Texas Cooperative Extension in Dallas.

"The quality base and performance base of cattle are both important to producers. Being able to market cattle to capture the benefits of those characteristics is very advantageous to cattlemen. We have the feedyards that can help producers market those types of cattle through about any marketing method that matches their breeds and genetics."

Retained Ownership—Of course, market prices usually dictate when it may be an advantage to retain ownership of your cattle all the way through a feedyard, or even through a grazing or backgrounding program. If calf prices are below a producer's financial expectations, then a retained ownership program can help increase the profit potential.

Dr. Ernie Davis, Texas A&M livestock marketing specialist in College Station, encourages producers to study information developed by him, A&M colleague James McGrann and James Mintert at Kansas State University, which can guide producers through the best opportunities for selling their calves. The booklet can be found at www.tcfa.org/markets.html.

Retained ownership can be especially beneficial to producers who have invested in good genetics for their herds, as well as other traits that can enhance grade and yield at the packer. "They should feed cattle that are above average in quality and in performance," says Davis. "They should have better than average genetics. Cattle need to perform with strong average daily gains and good feed conversion rates. They should grade Choice 2 or 3 with a 700 to 800 lb. carcass."



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There can be advantages over and above a price premium. Producers who retain ownership normally receive a report card on their cattle. Along with detailed performance data from the feedyard, carcass data can be provided by the packer. In addition, the West Texas A&M University Cattlemen's Carcass Data Service can also detail how any animal or set of cattle perform at the packer.

TCFA Member Feedyards will assist customers in developing a solid preconditioning program that can easily turn into additional return on investment. Healthy calves, those that most likely were preconditioned, consistently perform better at the feedyard and their doctor bill is much lower.

In the 2001-2002 Ranch to Rail results, healthy steers had an average of \$151.18 per head more favorable return. Steers that got sick not only incurred an average of \$44.55 more expense in medicine costs, but there was \$106.63 in potential "lost value" (\$151.18 - \$44.55) due to reduced efficiency, lowered gain and reduced

sale value. According to the report, calves that got sick were theoretically worth \$26.48 less per cwt, upon arrival than steers that never required treatment.

TCFA Membership—Morales concludes that other major perks of feeding at a TCFA yard are the many benefits provided through TCFA membership. "As a TCFA member, feeders are represented by some of the beef industry's leading advocates for legislation and other measures that are fair to the livestock industry," he says. "TCFA's voice is one of the loudest and strongest in the industry nationwide."

"TCFA's Beef Safety and Quality Assurance Program helps feedyards maintain their efficiency. And the new Animal Care Guidelines program adds another dimension to association's program that is a benchmark for the nation."

For further information about the advantages of feeding cattle at a TCFA Member Feedyard, visit the TCFA website at www.tcfa.org. You can also contact us at 806-358-3681. 