

After cattle are weaned (approximately 7-8 months of age, shortly before puberty), most continue to receive forages as a large portion of their diet. This is important to help their stomach continue to grow and develop properly. However, forages do not provide the high amount of digestible energy these cattle need to grow quickly. Farmers are able to utilize a number of feeds that are higher in digestible energy and lower in fiber – we refer to these as concentrates.

The concentrates feeds can include cereal grains (corn, wheat, oats, barley, sorghum), the by-products of milling or processing these grains (soybean meal, cottonseed meal, peanut meal), or by-products of ethanol or alcohol production (distillers grains). These feeds are more efficient sources of energy for the stomach in cattle, in turn making the animal more efficient in obtaining energy for growth, reproduction, or weight gain.

It takes a dedicated community of people to bring beef from farm to fork, but the result is wholesome, delicious and high-quality beef that people can feel good about.

RanchingTruth.org

About Us

We at Ranching Truth are a collection of ranchers, cowboys and agriculture professionals who have turned our passions into livelihoods to earn a living for our families and feed the world.

Contact Us

Phone: 575-415-8929

Email: info@ranchingtruth.org

"The miracle of cattle and beef markets is that consumers can take for granted that fresh beef is reliably available in grocery stores and restaurants every day without considering the fact that the beef they consume is the result of decisions made more than 2 years earlier when a cow-calf producer somewhere turned the bull in with the cows."

Most consumers won't think about any of this as they enjoy steaks and hamburgers; and that is as it should be. Cattle and beef producers all across the country work hard every day to make it look easy to be part of the most complex set of markets one can imagine.

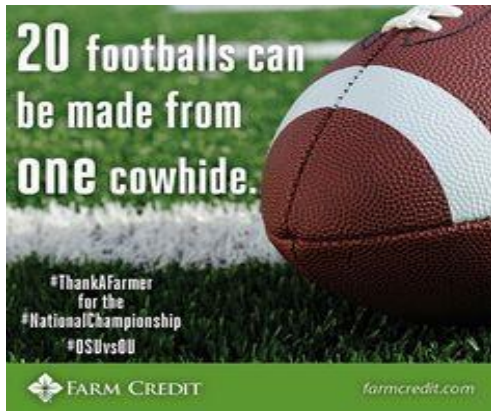


The Beef Lifecycle



The Beef Lifecycle

www.ranchingtruth.org



The beef lifecycle is perhaps one of the most unique and complex lifecycles of any food. It takes anywhere from 2-3 years to bring beef from farm to fork. The beef community is not vertically integrated, meaning that an animal will change owners or caretakers an average of 2-3 times during its lifetime. Each caretaker along the way specializes in a key area of a cow's life, providing the proper care, nutrition and animal health plans that the animal needs at that specific point in its life. The farmers and ranchers at each stage of the beef lifecycle utilize diverse resources available in their geographic area, such as local feedstuffs, land that can't be used to raise crops, or grass that might grow all year around. The entire beef community focuses on proper animal care, such as Beef Quality Assurance, in order to raise high-quality beef for millions of people around the world to enjoy. In short, it takes a broad community of dedicated people working together to bring beef from farm to fork. The beef community is made up of cow-calf ranches, stockers & backgrounders, livestock auction markets, feedyards (feedlots) and packing plants.

Cow-Calf Farm or Ranch – Raising beef begins with ranchers who maintain a breeding herd of mama cows that give birth to calves once a year. When a calf is born, it weighs about 60 to 100 pounds. Over the next few months, each calf will live off its mother's milk and graze on grass pastures

Weaning –Calves are weaned from their mother's milk at about six to 10 months of age when they weigh between 450 and 700 pounds. These calves continue to graze on grass pastures. About 1/3 of the female cows will stay on the farm to continue to grow and to become new mama cows the following year.

Stockers and Backgrounders – After weaning, cattle continue to grow and thrive by grazing on grass and pastures during the stocker and backgrounder phase.

Feedyard – Mature cattle are often moved to feedyards (also called feedlots). Here cattle typically spend four to six months, during which time they have constant access to water and room to move around. They are free to graze at feed bunks containing a carefully balanced diet made up of roughage (such as hay, grass and fiber), grain (such as corn, wheat and soybean meal) and local renewable feed sources, such as the tops of sugar beet plants, potato peelings or even citrus pulp. Veterinarians, nutritionists and cattlemen work together to look after each animal. Feedlots can range in size, shape and geographic location.

Packing Plant – Once cattle reach market weight (typically 1,200 to 1,400 pounds and 18 to 22 months of age), they are sent to a packing plant (also called a processing facility). United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspectors are stationed in all federally inspected packing plants and oversee the implementation of safety, animal welfare and quality standards from the time animals enter the plant until the final beef products are shipped to grocery stores and restaurants establishments. If animals are sick or have an injury the USDA inspector will deem the animal unfit for human consumption, and the animal will not enter the food supply.

Food Service and Retail - operators take steps to provide consumers with the safest, products possible.

