



Cattle on feed down 21%, marketings just off slightly

by L. H. Sumrell
Extension Economist
Agricultural Marketing

The July report of cattle on feed provided information of interest to both cattlemen and consumers. It showed that on July 1 farmers were fattening 21 percent fewer cattle for market than one year before. Even so, USDA analysts believe that marketings of fed cattle during the July-September quarter will be only slightly smaller than a year ago.

How could that be? Last summer cattle marketings were substantially reduced because some cattle feeders postponed sales of cattle until after the price ceilings were removed in September. Another point, more cattle may be put on feed after July 1 and sold before October 1 than a year ago.

The USDA survey and report covered 23 leading cattle feeding states. Information was obtained from most of the large feedlots and from a representative sample of the smaller ones.

To review a bit, the number of cattle on feed last April 1 was estimated at 12,310,000

— 8 percent fewer than a year earlier. The number of fed cattle marketed during the April-June quarter was figured at 6,291,000 — practically the same as in 1973. But the number of cattle placed on feed was only 4,028,000 — 29 percent fewer than last year.

More heavies, fewer lights

The number of cattle on feed July 1 was estimated at 10,047,000, compared to 12,729,000 in feedlots a year ago. Steers were listed at 7,305,000 — off 19 percent, while heifers were posted at 2,693,000 — down 27 percent. The larger reduction for heifers reflects increased holding for breeding purposes.

The numbers of heavy cattle in feedlots continued to exceed year-before levels. The greatest reductions were in the lightest weight groups. For these comparisons, we combine each weight group of steers with heifers weighing 200 pounds less — because they will be marketed at about the same time.

The number of steers weighing over 1,100 pounds plus the heifers weighing over 900 pounds was estimated at 1,066,000 — 10 percent more than last year. Steers at 900 to 1,100 pounds and heifers 200 pounds lighter totaled 3,754,000 — 11 percent fewer than a year before. Steers at 700 to 900 pounds plus heifers 200 pounds lighter numbered 3,428,000 — down 28 percent. Steers 500 to 700 pounds and heifers under 500 pounds were estimated at 1,543,000 — off 28 percent. And steer calves under 500 pounds were figured at 207,000 — down 61 percent from last year.

Price prospects uncertain

Price prospects for retail

beef — and especially for cattle — are very uncertain. There are doubts about consumer demand and marketing costs as well as about the number of cattle to be marketed.

Contrary to some reports, consumers have been providing good support for the beef market. For example, during the second quarter of this year they bought 10 to 12 percent more beef than one year before, and paid about the same price per pound.

Marketing costs from the feedlot to the checkout counter increased rapidly. Since consumers would not pay higher prices for beef, the added marketing costs were taken off the prices paid for live cattle.

It may be that increased competition among packers and retailers will reduce the spread between feedlot and retail counter during the next few months. If so, prices of cattle could increase substantially with little rise in retail prices. A dime a pound added to the price of beef, or subtracted from the marketing spread, could raise the value of cattle by more than \$4 a hundred pounds.

Heinold

Livestock producer advised Saturday to forward contract cattle that will be market late this

Harold Heinold of Heinold Hog Marketing division, action "could" producers from adverse cash this year and Heinold urged of 63 Heinold seven states producers to during the meeting of Valparaiso, Ind.

Among those meeting was manager of market.

Heinold said large supply cattle could fall could de both hogs and

"A large cattle will competition producers, expect hog any larger months of doing the 1973."

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Family reunion

The Qualls reunion was held Sunday at Pleasant Hill picnic grounds with 48 people in attendance.

Present were Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Qualls and Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Qualls and son of Carlinville; Mr. and Mrs. Dale West and their granddaughter, Wendy West, Mr. and Mrs. Larry Eades and Chad and Jerry West, all of Hettick; Mr. and Mrs. Bill Cagle of Buffalo;

Mr. and Mrs. Stan Qualls and April and Beverly Meisenheimer of Palmera

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beef cattle. There are considerable differences between the number of cattle on feed and the number of cattle marketed.