

Cattle Prices Drop In Light Volume



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The government said the unemployment rate dipped to 8.5 percent in December. Hopefully, the economy will put in a stronger performance this year than last.

Fed cattle prices were lower this week in light volume. The 5-area average price for slaughter steers sold through Thursday of this week on a live weight basis was \$121.00/cwt, down \$3.00 from last week, but \$15.55/cwt above the same week last year. Not enough fed cattle were sold on a dressed weight basis for a market quote.

Beef cutout value also was lower this week. On Friday morning, the choice boxed beef carcass cutout value was \$190.34/cwt, down \$4.26 from last week. The select carcass cutout was down 43 cents from the previous Friday to \$179.28 per hundred pounds of carcass weight. The choice-select spread, \$11.06, was down \$3.84 from a week earlier to the lowest level since September 14.

This week's cattle slaughter totaled 640,000 head, up 3.9 percent from the week before and down 12.5 percent compared to a year ago. The

average steer dressed weight for the week ending December 24 was 849 pounds, up 3 pounds from the week before, but down 6 pounds from a year ago.

Feeder cattle sales were light again week. Oklahoma City did not have a sale this week because of the New Year's holiday. Prices this week at most auctions across the country were \$2 to \$10 higher than last week. Missouri auctions were \$2 to as much as \$15 higher than last week. Price ranges for medium and large frame #1 steers were: 400-450# \$162-\$200, 450-500# \$160-\$198, 500-550# \$149.50-\$185.50, 550-600# \$142-\$178.50, 600-650# \$135-\$169, 650-700# \$136.50-\$164, 700-750# \$129.75-\$155.75, 750-800# \$126-\$153, 800-850# \$124.50-\$152.60/cwt.

The February live cattle futures contract settled at \$120.32/cwt today, down \$1.13 compared to last Friday. The April contract closed at \$124.60/cwt, off 85 cents for the week. The June contract settled at \$124.00/cwt. August ended the week at \$126.05/cwt.

The January feeder cattle futures contract gained 95 cents this week and settled at \$147.30/cwt. March feeder cattle ended the week at \$149.88 and the April contract settled at \$151.20.

The March corn futures contract ended the week at \$6.435/bushel, down 3 cents from the week. May closed at \$6.5075 and July ended the week at \$6.5575. Δ

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