

Keeping Record On Beef Cattle Pays

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Only 20 to 25 percent of cattle producers like to keep records according to Eldon Cole, livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

However, Cole says there is a financial incentive to keep very complete production records on beef cow-calf operations. The incentive is significant for those with age and source verified feeder calves.

The amount of the premium varies, but could be from \$20 to \$35 per head at harvest. At least that's the premium offered by some packers.

"The export market in particular, wants beef from cattle with age and source information. It's not that much trouble to identify cows and calves with tags or brands and the cost is minimal considering the expected returns," said Cole.

Producers not retaining ownership to harvest records will have to search out feeder calf markets or feedlots that may offer higher calf prices for calves with trace back potential.

"Just putting ear tags in a set of calves could send a positive message to the buyers on the seats that these calves have been handled. That means not only are ages possibly known, but there's a chance they've had some vaccinations given to them," said Cole.

Not only do owners need the ear tag to prove the calves' age, but the paperwork must be available on birthdates and cow identification so in case of an audit, the information can be proven.

"Tagging and birthdate recording is just the right thing to do, whether it's for the premium or just for management and breeding purposes," said Cole. △



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