

# Scales A Valuable Tool For Every Cattle Producer

MT. VERNON, MO.

**A**t some point in the life of most beef cattle they will run over a scale to establish their market value. After they are harvested, the animal's carcass weight is used to arrive at the true worth as beef according to Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

"Besides using a set of scales to arrive at the market value for cattle, scales also help determine genetic merit," said Cole.

Weights taken at birth, weaning, yearling and harvest time are the basis for the development of expected progeny difference (EPD) data that are used in making breeding stock and promotion decisions. The EPD is viewed as a powerful tool when making objective decisions.

"A scale also helps reduce over or under dosing medications. Since most of those products are administered based on weights, it's possible to save several cents or even dollars per head when you know the true weight," said Cole.

Management decisions are often aided by knowledge about weight gains made on certain pastures, shrinkage to market, and treatment differences.

Other opportunities for scale use involve the Show-Me-Select program at pre-breeding time, obtaining weaning weights on calves (six to eight months of age) and weighing cows to assist in determining the optimum size for your management system and budgeting feed needs.

"The different ways a scale is used are as numerous as the cattle producer's imagination. After a few months use you'll find it's a sound investment and wonder how you got along without one,"

said Cole.

Scales come in a variety of sizes from those capable of weighing a potload to an individual scale that might be capable of only collecting a birth weight. The price varies but many individual load bar scales capable of weighing mature cows and bulls run under \$2,000.

"I've had many farmers say after buying a scale that they didn't realize how much it helped and how often they used it. If you don't feel you have



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enough cattle to justify your own purchase of a scale you might go partners with others in your neighborhood," said Cole.

Different models of scales are available with most being fairly portable. Some feed companies also offer scales as a customer service. △