

U.S. Beef Exports Dip Slightly In 2009



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Beef imports last year totaled to 2.627 billion pounds, up 3.5 percent from 2008, but down 29 percent compared to the record import year of 2004. Canada was the origin of 30.9 percent of U.S. beef imports in 2009 with 30.2 percent coming from Australia and 19.7 percent imported from New Zealand. Beef imports equaled 10 percent of U.S. production in 2009.

Cattle imports in 2009 totaled 2,001,769 head, down 12.4 percent compared to 2008 and the lowest import total since 2005. Cattle imports from Canada were down 33 percent and imports from Mexico were up 34 percent. Canada was the source of 53 percent of U.S. cattle imports with 47 percent coming from Mexico. The U.S. exported 57,973 head of cattle in 2009 with 78 percent going to either Canada or Mexico.

U.S. beef exports during 2009 totaled 1.869 billion pounds, down 1 percent compared to 2008. In total, 7 percent of U.S. beef was exported during 2009. Our five biggest foreign customers were Mexico, Canada, Japan, Vietnam and South Korea. The biggest increase in beef exports was to Hong Kong which purchased 50 million pounds more U.S. beef in 2009 than in 2008. The biggest export decline last year was to Mexico which purchased 86 million pounds less beef from the U.S. than in 2008.

Cattle prices moved higher this week. On Friday morning, the choice carcass cutout value was \$1.4621/pound, up 5.61 cents for the week

and 12 cents higher than last year. The select cutout was up 6.23 cents from the previous Friday to \$1.4462 per pound.

The higher cutout values lifted fed cattle prices. The 5-area daily weighted average price for slaughter steers sold through Thursday on a live weight basis was \$88.79/cwt, up \$1.41 from a week earlier and \$9.33 higher than a year ago. Steers sold on a dressed basis averaged \$144.48/cwt, \$4.33 higher than the week before and \$16.21 higher than the same week of 2009.

The April live cattle futures contract ended the week at \$93.30/cwt, up \$2.53 for the week. June settled at \$90.87, up \$2.32 from the week before. August settled at \$89.32/cwt and the October live cattle contract ended the week at \$91.42.

This week's cattle slaughter totaled 620,000 head, up 3% from the previous week and up 0.7 percent compared to a year ago.

Steer carcass weights averaged 833 pounds the first week of February which was 22 pounds lighter than a year ago. Steer weights have been below year-earlier levels for each of the last 11 weeks.

Cash bids for feeder cattle this week were mostly steady on heavy weight feeders to as much as \$8 higher on calves. The price ranges at Oklahoma City for medium and large frame steers were: 400-450# \$129-137.25, 450-500# \$123-132.50, 500-550# \$117-\$124.50, 550-600# \$110.25-\$119.75, 600-650# \$104.25-\$113.25, 650-700# \$101.50-\$109, 700-750# \$98-\$104.75, 750-800# \$95.75-\$102.25, and 800-1000# \$90-\$98.50/cwt.

Feeder cattle futures also were higher this week. The March contract ended the week at \$102.65/cwt, up \$2.90 from last Friday. April gained \$3.33 this week to settle at \$104.15/cwt.

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