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CATTLE FEEDING PROSPECTS

Profits from feeding out cattle during the 1955-56 season are expected to be moderate, according to agricultural economists with the United States Department of Agriculture.

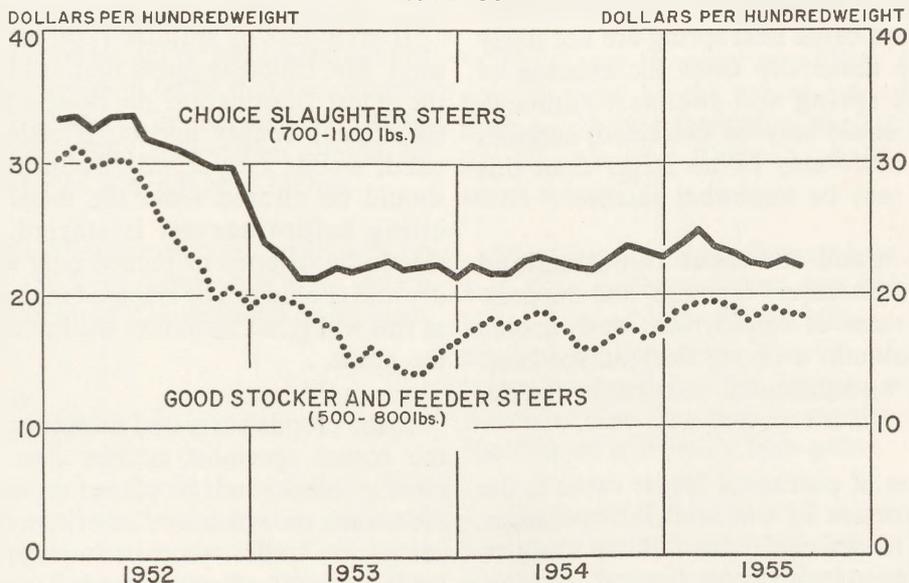
Based on a representative program for the short feeding of yearling steers in the Corn Belt, profits during the 1954-55 season are estimated at less than half of those during the previous season and the third lowest dur-

ing the past nine feeding seasons. The higher cost of feeder steers last fall and the decline in fed-steer prices during the spring were not offset by lower feed costs; therefore, profit margins were reduced.

In August this year, the margin between feeder- and fat-cattle prices was quite narrow. On the Fort Worth market, the spread between Choice slaughter steers and Good

PRICES OF CHOICE SLAUGHTER STEERS AND GOOD STOCKER AND FEEDER STEERS

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SOURCE: Based on U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

feeder steers was \$3.75 per hundredweight, or the smallest for any August since 1951.

Present prospects are that a record or near-record supply of feed concentrates will be produced this year; and this output, together with carry-over supplies, will place feed supplies per animal unit at record levels. In addition, the support prices for feed grains are lower than those in 1954, as is shown in the following table.

Grain	Unit	National average support price	
		1955	1954
Grain sorghums	cwt.	\$1.78	\$2.28
Corn ¹	bu.	1.19	1.22
Oats	bu.	.61	.75
Barley	bu.	.94	1.15

¹ Noncommercial areas.

Although the Government agricultural economists expect feeding margins to be rather narrow during the coming season, they believe that farmers will be able to carry on feeding operations on a smaller spread between feeder- and fat-cattle prices because of the lower feed costs.

The farm marketing specialists feel that prices of fed cattle next spring are not likely to change materially from the average of those this spring and summer. Although more fed cattle may be marketed, supplies of other cattle may be no larger than this year and may be somewhat smaller.

The demand for meat is determined largely by consumers' incomes, and the present high rates of employment and income should maintain a strong demand for beef. However, no substantial increase in the demand for beef is expected next year.

The cost of purchased feeder cattle is the major expense in the feed-lot operation. Prices of feeder cattle this fall are likely to be maintained by a strong demand, and further seasonal price declines probably will be only moderate. Relatively good range conditions and lower feed costs will be impor-

tant factors influencing the demand for feeders in the fall.

Because of the somewhat lower feed prices, a program which will utilize large amounts of feed — such as the long feeding of steer calves — may prove quite popular. In such an event, prices for calves this fall may be somewhat stronger than those for steers.

Profits from next year's feeding operations naturally will vary according to the feeder's ability, type of feeding program, relative costs of feeds, and the season in which the livestock are marketed. Feeders who obtain favorable results from the use of synthetic hormones may be able to earn larger profits from steer-feeding operations than standard price comparisons would indicate.

Hints on Mechanical Harvesting of Cotton

The grade of mechanically harvested cotton can be either raised or lowered by the practices followed during harvest, says Fred C. Elliott, cotton specialist for the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

If strippers or spindle-type pickers are used, Mr. Elliott suggests that producers get the latest information on defoliation from their local county agents. If strippers are used, weeds (especially Johnson grass) should be cleared from the fields by spot oiling before harvest is started. Cotton should be stripped or picked only when it is dry and should not be tramped in the trailers, as this will grind trash into the lint and lower the grade.

If the crop is harvested on a custom basis, the cotton specialist advises that a small piece of blackboard be placed on the side of the trailer, on which can be written the number of the trailer, producer's name, weight loaded, pounds of cotton needed to make the desired weight bale, and the name of the picker-operator. This information will be of value to the ginner, as well as to the producer.

If the producer finds it necessary to put the cotton on the ground and load it later, Mr. Elliott suggests that the plans for a tractor loader (No. 378) be obtained from the local county agent.

Destroy Cotton Stalks Early



Early destruction of cotton stalks — which destroys the food supply and stops continuous breeding of cotton insects — is the best and most economical means of reducing damage from boll weevils and pink bollworms during the following crop season, according to a report from Texas A. & M. College.

Best results are obtained by destroying the stalks with a shredder-type stalk cutter 30 days or more before frost. The stalk shredder will kill large numbers of pink bollworms and boll weevils mechanically and will expose many of the remaining insects to the weather and other hazards by evenly spreading the debris over the ground.

In most northwestern areas where the crop cannot be harvested before frost, the stalks should be grazed or left standing until after a hard freeze in order that boll weevils and pink bollworms in the immature bolls will be killed. The stalks then should be plowed under to a depth of 6 inches.

Early stalk destruction is profitable on individual fields or farms but is of much greater value when it is practiced on an area-wide basis.

Winter Legumes

Texas farmers should be making plans now for the seed and fertilizers they will need for planting winter legumes. In most areas of the State, the best time for fall plantings is mid-September to early November, reports Ben R. Spears, Extension agronomist with Texas A. & M. College.

Legumes recommended for Texas are as follows.

East Texas Timber area — hairy vetch, Singletary peas, Austrian winter peas, and crimson clover. For the southern half of the area, the less winter-hardy common and Willamette vetches and Dixie Wonder peas are recommended.

Blackland, Grand Prairie, and south Texas regions — Hubam and Madrid sweet clovers, hairy vetch, and winter peas.

West Cross Timbers area — hairy vetch, winter peas, and sweet clovers.

High Plains and the El Paso and Pecos Valleys — irrigated crops of alfalfa, biennial sweet clovers, hairy vetch, and Austrian winter peas.

Mr. Spears suggests that local county agents be contacted for details on legume varieties, as well as for information on fertilizing, inoculating, and seeding operations.

Infrared Lamps Save Pigs

Three pigs in every two litters in Texas can be saved by the use of infrared lamps during and after farrowing, according to E. M. Regenbrecht, Texas A. & M. College swine specialist.

The lamps provide adequate heat for sows and their newborn litters and help reduce heavy loss of pigs from chilling or being crushed by the sows. The use of infrared lamps makes it possible for pigs to be farrowed so that marketings can be made at the time of seasonally high prices.

The lamps should be used when the temperature drops below 60 degrees. They should be turned on a few hours before farrowing and left on the young animals from 3 days to 2 weeks, depending upon weather conditions.

A 250-watt lamp costs about 18 cents a day to operate. The saving of one pig would more than cover the cost of operation for several weeks.

Cimarron Oats

Cimarron, a new winter-hardy oat variety developed by the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and the United States Department of Agriculture, is expected to be best adapted to northern and northwestern Oklahoma.

The new oat variety has produced good yields in field trials, and the test weight of the grain is equal to that of the other varieties commonly grown in the State.

Although Cimarron is not as winter-hardy as Wintok, which generally is considered the most winter-hardy oat variety in the Nation, it is more hardy than the other varieties tested. The new oat variety is especially suitable for grazing, since it makes rapid early fall growth.

New Hybrid Spinach

A new spinach variety — Early Hybrid 7 — has been developed by the United States Department of Agriculture and tested by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. The hybrid is resistant to blue mold and blight; is semicompact and dark green; and grows upright, which makes it easier to harvest mechanically.

In tests conducted in southern Texas and the Arkansas Valley of Arkansas, Early Hybrid 7 yielded 13.5 to 19.6 tons of spinach per acre as a fall crop and 9.7 tons in the spring, compared with 5.2 to 14.8 tons for standard varieties in the fall and 3.7 to 7.1 tons in the spring.

Seed of the new spinach variety will be available in limited quantities for commercial planting this fall.

High-Energy Poultry Rations



High-energy layer-breeder rations for hens developed by Oklahoma A. & M. College poultrymen proved more efficient and practical than low-energy rations after a 44-week feeding trial.

In the feeding trials, one group of hens required only 6.3 pounds of high-energy feed to produce a dozen eggs, while another group fed on a low-energy ration required 7.67 pounds of feed. In order to produce a case of eggs (30 dozen), 230 pounds of low-energy feed at a cost of \$8.40 were required, while a case of eggs was produced on 189 pounds of high-energy feed at a cost of only \$7.20.

In addition to lower feed costs, the mortality rate among hens fed high-energy rations was only 12.1 percent, compared with 23.8 percent for those fed the low-energy rations.

In other tests, a high-energy, high-vitamin ration fed to turkey hens in 1953 is believed to have been responsible for an 11.2-percent increase in the hatchability of eggs compared with the average hatchability in the preceding 4 years.

The hatchability of eggs produced on the usual breeder-hen rations for the 4 years was only 67.9 percent, compared with 79.1 percent for eggs produced in 1953 on the high-energy, high-vitamin diet.

Certified planting seed may cost slightly more, but the added cost is insurance against poor stands and yields, according to a Texas A. & M. College report. These usually are the best seed available of a particular variety.

The *Agricultural News Letter* is prepared in the Research Department under the direction of J. Z. ROWE, Agricultural Economist.