Pasture Feeding is Safe and Relatively Low Cost: A Feeding Program for Limited Resource Cattle Producers

The feeding programs used by farmers:

A
Supplemental concentrates

B
Combination of A, C, D

C
Pasture feeding

D
Hay

The preferred feeding program among farmers is “B” -- Combination method.

Concentrates?
These are commercially made animal feeds in the form of grains or pellets.

Facts about Supplemental Concentrates Feed
1. May contain high quality protein.
2. Some offer growth hormones containing low levels of antibiotics or parasiticides.

Concerns?
1. Low levels of antibiotics or parasiticides may increase the resistance of target organisms and eventually affect overall effectiveness.
2. Low in essential fiber.
3. Residuals from these products may enter the soil and water when eliminated from the animals body through feces and urine.
4. Consumer acceptance of cattle products raised on artificial supplement.
5. Supplemental concentrates are expensive.

Studies have shown no significant difference in weight gain between supplemental-fed and pasture-fed cattle within a six-month period (see Table 1).

Table 1: Initial and final weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Initial wt. (lbs) 6/26/02</th>
<th>Final wt. (lbs) 12/09/02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-medicated supplement</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicated supplement</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture-grazed only</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What does this mean?
1. Low income and small producers can feed their herds to market weight on high quality pasture with a good rotational grazing strategy at relatively low cost.
2. Producers should practice prudent use of medicated feed that is environmentally friendly and limits food safety risks.

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The Research-Extension Fact Sheet is composed of research-based information transformed to better target our clientele, and will be published as a series of issues.

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