



Maximizing Returns

Cattle prices keep setting new highs. Feeders, fats, pairs, or bred cattle are all setting records. How do you take advantage of high prices in times like these?

Cattle are too expensive to lose right now. It has been said that cattle health is the biggest wild card in the cattle business. If you are buying calves to finish or run on grass, you have already invested a tremendous amount of money into

these calves. We need these cattle to perform and gain and make hay while the sun shines so-to-speak. That means putting technologies to use: dewormers, implants, feed additives, fly control, solid nutrition, good management, etc.

Time and again, dewormers provide some of the best return on investment. Internal parasites rob gains and negatively impact the health of your cattle. Spending the time and money to do it right is worth your time. Cattle are exposed to parasites or worms when they are put out on grass. At that point, the worms take up residence in the digestive tract and begin the next part of their life cycle. A dewormer acts on these stages when the parasite is reproducing inside the animal. From a strategic standpoint, the best time to deworm cattle is several weeks after they begin grazing. Many of us end up deworming in the spring at turn-out time which is not ideal but provides us with some protection early season. It is imperative that you deworm cattle when they come off grass. Cows or calves are not going to be re-exposed to parasites in a drylot scenario because worms do not live on harvested feed. Clean the internal parasites up and optimize your gains in the next stage.

Implant your cattle going on to the finisher. Implant your calves that are headed to grass with their mothers and implant your grass cattle when you haul them out. If you get an additional 20 lbs of weaning weight, which is very reasonable to expect from decades of research, that is worth over \$55 in the fall. With the cost of a calf-hood implant being less than \$2, that makes your return over 25:1. With grass cattle or finishers, you can expect more gain at a reduced cost of gain. Don't let the chant of the auctioneer hypnotize you into giving this up! Your non-implanted calves need to bring \$10/cwt over the implanted calves for you to get paid to leave the implant out. Over 95% of fed cattle in the United States receive an implant at some point in their life. If you aren't in a specific non-hormone treated cattle (NHTC) program, you are not likely to get the benefit of marketing NHTC cattle.

Feedlot cattle, grass cattle, or pairs can all benefit from getting an ionophore. The ionophore of choice will change depending on your specific scenario. Rumensin is the ionophore of choice in the feedlot to help improve gain and reduce the amount of feed needed per pound of gain. Bovatec is a good fit for grazing cattle. Both will provide coccidiosis control in addition to improving feed efficiency.

In a Nutshell:

- Put technologies to work to maximize returns
- Dewormers provide good return on investment
- Implant calves going to grass
- Consider using fly control on pasture or in feedlot
- Ionophores help improve feed efficiency
- Aureomycin helps prevent respiratory disease and anaplasmosis
- Experior is a go-to product for fat cattle
- Good management and nutrition are still important

Another additive to consider is Aureomycin. Respiratory disease in young calves can be problematic and can negatively affect calves for the rest of their lives. Feeding Aureomycin in the RL calf developer might be a good option. Running a 5-day treatment through your yearlings or using an Aureomycin mineral might also be a good option. Anaplasmosis has been diagnosed in South Dakota in the past several years, so keeping your cows protected by feeding Aureomycin mineral is an option also.

Experior is becoming a go-to product to finish cattle. The carcass weight retention that producers are seeing along with the improvement in dressing percent is impressive and the return generated is attractive as well. It is easier to manage for days on feed than Optaflexx was and there are several options to get that in the bunk for your fat cattle.

Fly control through feed-through products like Clarifly or Altosid are effective in reducing fly populations. Fly pressure can cause a myriad of issues like reduced gain or intake, disease spread, or blind quarters in cows. Reducing fly loads makes cattle more comfortable and gains typically improve as a result. Parasitic wasps can also be used for feedlot fly control.

And as always, solid nutritional programs and good management are the cornerstone of every successful cattle operation. When cattle get the nutrients necessary to perform at their best, the rest is icing on the cake. Your day-to-day work might seem monotonous, but is absolutely key to your bottom-line at the end of year. Feeding on a consistent schedule, making sure intakes are on target, getting mineral in front of the cows, going over your health protocols and implementing them in a timely manner are all things that matter. When prices are high, it's time to keep the pedal to the floor and maximize your return. Cattle are worth too much to leave anything on the table and the opportunity might not be there next time around. Talk to your local feed consultant about opportunities in your operation.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- Use a good mineral program for breeding season- ask about Ultimate Breeder 8, Availa-4 tubs, or Stress Tubs
- Get implants for calves and yearlings going to grass
- Order wasps for feedlot fly control or ask about **Clarifly** for feed-through fly control in the feedlot
- Talk to your veterinarian about your vaccination and de-worming plans
- Have a breeding soundness exam and semen test done on your bulls to help ensure high pregnancy rates
- **Consider using Livestock Risk Protection (LRP)** on your spring-born calves to protect your price and profit
- Ask about using Diamond V XPC for heat stress for feedlot cattle

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