

Easy Does It



Hay Springs, Neb., producer Ray Reimann tries to keep cattle that fit the easy-fleshing, deep-bodied template.

Maintaining source groups avoids stress, enhances grade.

Story & photos by
MIRANDA REIMAN

Some teenagers can't wait to leave home to expand their horizons. Others are a little more apprehensive. For them, it's a source of anxiety and worry.

Cattle tend to fall into that second group. When they're sent to a feedlot, everything in their world changes: their surroundings, their feedstuffs and sometimes even their social groups.

Ray Reimann of Hay Springs, Neb., eases calves from his 225-cow herd through the transition from the range to the small feedlot on his ranch.

"They have less opportunity to be stressed than if we moved or intermingled them," he says. "They're never mixed with anything. That probably has an effect on how they do."

Warding off disease problems is one advantage to his system.

"You can buy calves with every shot in the world, but that's just not going to cut it if you throw them in together," Reimann says. "In my experience, if you get mixed calves in, you're going to get problems."

Reimann keeps his own calves separate from purchases and tries to bring only vaccinated calves into the yard.

"If they're going to be sick, you'll have less of a chance that fat cells will be deposited as intramuscular," he says, noting the detrimental effects of illness on marbling deposition. Reimann knows the value of marbling and many of the management practices that enhance it.

"We tend to shoot for the Angus-influenced cattle with CAB® (Certified Angus Beef® brand) and premium programs in mind," he says, noting that most of those sell

"You can buy calves with every shot in the world, but that's just not going to cut it if you throw them in together."

— Ray Reimann

on the grid. "Probably 95% of the time we've been satisfied going with the grid. We typically average a \$40 premium per head. That doesn't sound like a lot, but it's not a lot of extra work."

Reduced stress and better grades

Reimann calves in April and May, weans in the fall and then steps the calves up on a high-energy backgrounding ration through the winter months. By the finishing phase, the calves have made a full transition to the Purina Mills Impact program.

"This Purina program is helping us to realize the genetic potential of these cattle," Reimann says. "It can't bring out what they don't have, but it will maximize whatever potential they do have."

It has helped Reimann's ranch cattle grade more than 95% Choice most of the time. One load last spring went 56.4% CAB, plus 5.1% Prime. Another was 50% CAB and 2.3% Prime.

Reimann also likes the ease of the intake-modifying technology. He and his wife, Peggy, have plenty of work to do with the ranch and feedyard, only enlisting the part-time help of two of their grown children.

"You don't have to worry quite so much about the ration," he says.

"The intake modifiers help with the consumption factor."

Reimann paints the picture of a stormy day when calves don't want to head for the feedbunk.

"The ones on the Impact program won't come out to eat any better than the other ones, but when they do come out, they don't get that acidosis problem," he says. "About 2 or 3 pounds and they're satisfied. They might have to come back more often to catch up, but they don't gorge themselves."

That adds up to better grades, too, he says. "Any time you can reduce stress, no matter how insignificant you think it might be, it's a factor."

Reimann visually sorts his market-ready animals and keeps those back that he thinks need a few more days on feed to grade. Although he admits that method is not perfect, as cattle must first have the genetic potential.

"We have some out there that I don't even know why I sort back. They'll never grade. I don't care how many years you keep them," he jokes.

Reimann has a specific body conformation in mind.

"For a while, a lot of people were going for a snakey type of cattle that had no belly and no capacity. I don't even like to see that on the place," he says. "You've got to have capacity in order to gain and do well. Fleshing ability ties into marbling, too."

Whether it's buying calves or choosing replacement heifers, Reimann tries to keep cattle that fit the easy-fleshing, deep-bodied template. In the end, he knows that, more often than not, they fit his marketing channel, and that can add up to dollars in his pocket.



Reimann calves in April and May, weans in the fall and then steps the calves up on a high-energy backgrounding ration through the winter months.