



2024 Dairy Beef Short Course

Ag-vocating for a sustainable dairy community through education

The Issue

With the effects of drought, export fluctuations and market variability, the beef cow herd has shrunk to levels not seen since 1961. The top ten beef cow states, which currently represent 57.3 percent of total beef cows, accounted for 79.4 percent of the year over year decrease in total beef cow numbers and 67.7 percent of the decrease from 2019 to 2024. This decline in cattle numbers means the 2024 calf crop will be smaller than a year ago, and it could be 2.5 percent smaller than the 2023 calf crop. This puts the production of Beef on Dairy (BXD) calves in an enviable position in the market, provided dairy producers are bringing the right calves into the system.

This year's short course continued the history of highlighting market trends and new research that helps to improve BXD profitability in feedlots.

Our Response

For over a decade, the coordinating Extension Specialists of I-29 Moo University have hosted the Dairy Beef Short Course program focusing on current issues, research and industry topics. In fact, the I-29 Moo University Dairy/Beef Short Course is the longest running and arguably the largest and most respected dairy beef event of its kind in the USA.

The 2024 topics and speakers included:

- Dr. Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University, with the industry outlook
- Dr. Ken Odde, Kansas State University, with a review of BXD video auction analysis
- Dr. Bob Weaver, Kansas State University, with a review of genetic considerations for a more valuable calf
- Lauren Kimble, Select Sires, discussing how dairy influenced cattle fit into value-based markets

The 2024 I-29 Moo University Dairy Beef Short Course was held Thursday, March 21, dropping the long-time tradition of being the first educational program of the Central Plains Dairy Expo in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Results from the 2023 evaluations showed a definite preference to have more room and classroom seating, so to accommodate that and have room for larger attendance, we changed the date and moved it to the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center.

We had 83 attendees: 34 percent self-identified as cattle feeders or employees, 48 percent as industry and 11 percent as dairy producers. Of the 83 attendees, 49 completed the post retrospective tool for a response rate of 59 percent.



Impact

To gauge the improvement in understanding of key topics among attendees, we asked ten questions. We used a 5-point Likert protocol and the results showed improvement in all ten key topics, with an average improvement of +.65. The individual topic changes are shown below:

Questions	Average Change
• Profit potential with value added BXD terminal calves	+ .86
• Challenges for dairy cattle in the beef value chain	+ .50
• Beef and dairy cattle carcass type differences	+ .52
• BXD motivators for the industry	+ .66
• Improving and documenting emissions-improving protocols	+ .89
• Supply chain contributions of BXD calves	+ .79
• Why BXD crosses add value	+ .68
• BXD calves attributes compared to dairy calves	+ .49
• How DXB cross calves are replacing Holstein calves	+ .69
• The cost of liver abscesses to industry	+ .46

The real test of an Extension program is if it leads to positive change and reflects intentions to adopt new practices. We identified nine of these best practices and asked for their intentions. Across all nine best management practices, 31.27 percent indicated they would definitely change or at least consider the change. Details include:

Management Practice	Definitely will	Already adopted	Maybe	Will not
Communicate the merits of your calves to your buyer	31.49%	20.00%	45.71%	2.86%
Re-evaluate the criteria used for sire selection	38.89%	22.22%	38.89%	0.00%
Ask your buyers for feedback regarding performance	40.63%	18.75%	40.63%	0.00%
Retain ownership of BXD calves to capture margins	25.81%	16.13%	48.39%	9.63%
Bring BXD calves into your system	20.59%	26.47%	50.00%	2.94%
Change criteria for beef bulls used on dairy cows	39.39%	21.21%	39.39%	0.00%
Change quality grade expectations for BXD calves	29.73%	16.22%	54.05%	0.00%
Monitor liver abscess incidence in my cattle	32.43%	18.92%	32.43%	16.22%
Market to consumer trends	22.50%	12.50%	62.50%	2.50%



We then asked them to evaluate their satisfaction with the program and with each presenter. Across all presenters, attendees rated them 87.6 percent completely or mostly satisfied, and 93.7 percent where completely or mostly satisfied with the entire short course.

Presenter/Topic	Completely	Mostly	Slightly	Neutral	Not at all
Dr. Derrell Peel, industry outlook	72.92%	22.92%	2.08%	2.08%	0.00%
Dr. Ken Odde, BXD video auction analysis	47.92%	31.25%	12.77%	6.25%	2.08%
Dr. Bob Weaber, genetic considerations	53.19%	29.79%	12.77%	4.26%	0.00%
Lauren Kimble, BXD value-based markets	55.32%	37.21%	9.30%	4.65%	0.00%

We assessed the value producers put on this program by asking them to estimate the benefit to their farm as a direct result of what they learned at this program on a per head basis. Thirty percent indicated an annual value of over 10 dollars per head. When aggregated for attendees responding to the evaluation, that showed a total value exceeding \$18,800. (n=30)

One of the truest measures of an Extension program is the number of people that those in attendance will share the information they learned with. We asked that question and found that at least an additional 1,008 will receive the information.

Take Home Messages

- Importance of sire selection. Find the right bulls. Not enough difference in the value of heifer to steer to justify use of sorted semen.
- Current Status of beef herd, cow herd size and cattle numbers, in general. How different is this cattle cycle compared to the last 50 years?
- BXD numbers – death rate, grading, marbling, carcass quality, uniformity, profit potential, added value over dairy calves.
- Greenhouse gas emissions.
- Beef/Cattle profitability should be good for a couple more years. BXD is growing. BXD crosses are valuable to the beef industry. We are in a very bullish market and may stay there for some time.
- Lots of research on genetics and differentiating feeder price based on value.
- Holsteins marble, need more muscle in terminal side.
- Market BXD calves on grid versus live weight.
- Cull cows would still command a value to carry a BXD calf.
- BXD are comparable to all beef.
- Feeders will continue to be choosier on purchasing BXD calves.
- Premium available on right BXD calves
- Advancements are rapidly changing.
- Need to put emphasis on muscling.
- Do we need to start selecting dairy bulls with more terminal traits?
- Sustainability gets overused and the message gets lost when we should be focusing on production.
- U.S. drought, what the future looks like there.
- Better genetics will provide a better meat source.

Suggested topics for 2025

- Open lots and calf housing
- Nutrition
- Liver issues
- Feeding research of different programs
- Management and feeding programs - wet calf to market
- Closeouts, performance needs
- Cheapening sexed semen cost
- What is the best beef breed
- Slight improvement on every management aspect
- Ration strategies and roughage levels for optimal finishing BXD calves
- Packer thoughts long-term and what their demand/interest will be in BXD calves when native beef cow herd is back to normal levels
- More genetic selection work and continued nutrition research
- More education and management
- Does low carbon beef have a different taste profile?
- Marketing opportunities/packers/contracts
- Managing supply chain costs, challenges, and pain points
- Manage treatment to lower morbidity and feeding programs
- Help packers accept DXB fats
- Health tracking of BXD from birth to finish- number of treatments, morbidity, mortality, carcass quality. Need the data to strongly encourage dairies to really pay attention to newborn calf care.
- Focus on feeding to improve performance and maximize genetics and the animals health
- End point management; baby call (hutch and 60 days out of hutch); Nutrition and care
- Char/Jersey compared to Hol/Angus; Char/Angus compared to Hol/Angus

More Information

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