



PHOTO BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

# Make Decisions that Make 'Cents'

Retained ownership gives producers tools to make better management decisions.

by *Kasey Brown*, associate editor

**M**ore information lets you make better decisions. Simply put, cattlemen make money with fast-growing animals, heavy carcasses and high-quality carcasses, but do you know which calves do that for your operation? Julie Walker, South Dakota State University extension beef specialist, asked this question to attendees of the Range Beef Cow Symposium in November.

Retaining ownership gives cattlemen more data to make those management decisions that will add value to their operations, she said. It offers a baseline on calves produced.

She noted that the proportion of cattle marketed has shifted from being sold on a cash basis to mostly alternative marketing. This lends itself to calf value-discovery programs, generally known as retaining ownership. These programs share feedlot performance, carcass characteristics and economic parameters with cattlemen.

She shared the profits by steers from five producers in a retained ownership program. In order, received profits per steer were \$33.87, \$33.47, \$59.90, \$21.97 and -\$2.53 (see Fig. 2 on page 285). Walker shared data

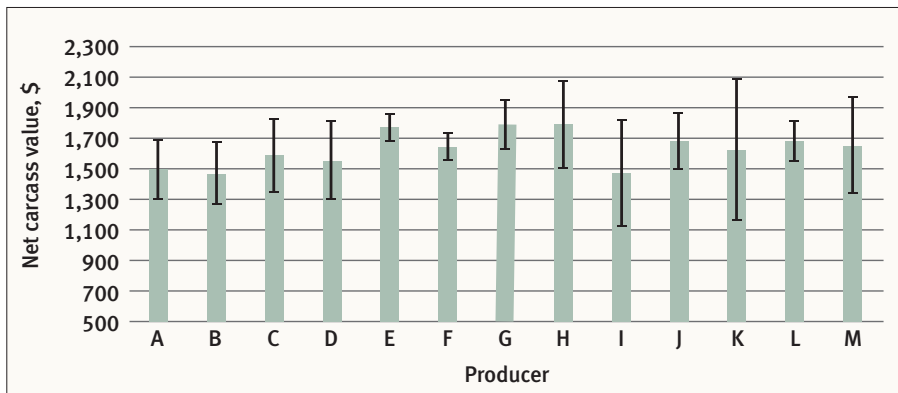
about average daily gain, ribeye area and hot carcass weight, all of which didn't show much difference between the five groups of steers. The largest factor was difference in quality grades. In the same order, quality grades achieved were 80% Choice, 0% Choice, 100% Choice, 60% Choice and 20% Choice. While the second group was an outlier of receiving premiums with 0% Choice, she admitted that it is still important to look at individual animals.

More data helps make the decisions to improve quality. She shared what breeders in the retained ownership program A to Z Retained Ownership Inc. said about the information they received.

"Our cattle are pretty uniform, but the carcass value of our calves varied by up to

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**Fig. 1: 2014-2015 avg. net carcass value by producers**



**As part of the *Angus Journal's* full meeting coverage, you can listen to Julie Walker's presentation at <http://bit.ly/1SqC5p7>.**



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\$150. We didn’t realize there was that much difference,” she shared from one cattleman.

Another breeder in the program said, “I’ve been surprised at the profitability variation between the high calf and the low calf.”

Not knowing the actual carcass information is like leaving money on the table, she concluded. Management decisions

in the cow herd affect performance in the feedlot and carcass characteristics. Don’t forget that pre- and postweaning performance is important in making management decisions.



Journal’s online coverage of the 2015 Range Beef Cow Symposium hosted Nov. 17-19, 2015, in Loveland, Colo. For additional coverage, to review this presentation’s PowerPoint or to listen to the presentation, visit the Newsroom at [www.rangebeefcow.com](http://www.rangebeefcow.com). The Angus Journal’s coverage of the event is made possible through collaboration with the event committee and sponsorship of LiveAuctions.tv.

**Editor’s Note:** This summary is part of the Angus



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► Retaining ownership gives cattlemen more data to make those management decisions that will add value to their operations, Julie Walker said.

**Fig. 2: Profit by steer**

