
PASTURE TO PLATE

Feeding out calves yields extra profits for Gleonda Farms.

by James Ritchie



Records play a big part in the Kleeman's beef cattle success. A recent group of steers graded 96 percent Choice, with two-thirds Yield Grades 1 and 2. This performance earned them a \$3 per cwt. premium. The Kleemans are active in beef cattle organizations and Glenda is a member of the NCA's Public Affairs Committee.

Leon and Glenda Kleeman sell their cattle grade and yield, not live weight. This marketing effort has earned them a \$3 per hundredweight premium. But it's their breeding management efforts that will keep profits flowing down the road.

"You have to know your cattle. Grade and yield marketing can beat you if you don't have the right kind," says Leon.

Thanks to more than 25 years of performance testing, Leon and Glenda Kleeman know their cattle well. As owners and managers of Gleonda Farms, an Angus operation near Miller in southwestern Missouri, the Kleemans concentrate on breeding and keeping the "right kind."

The Kleeman's \$3 premium accrued on a group of fall-weaned steers and heifers the Kleemans put on feed at Neill Feedlot, Welch, Okla. The cattle finished in mid-May 1993 and went to IBP processing plant at Emporia, Kan.

When the Kleemans subtracted the cost of

feed, yardage and interest from their IBP check, they found their retained ownership cattle had earned nearly \$104 profit per head. This is over what the cattle would have brought if sold as weaned calves the previous fall.

The Kleemans spent part of the \$104 to get complete carcass information on 47 head of cattle. In their mind, it was money well spent. They were pleased with the way the cattle performed, both in the feedlot and on the rail.

"We decided to feed out our cattle to earn more money on them," Glenda says. "And this gave us an ideal opportunity to learn how our cattle do after they leave our farm."

The Kleemans weren't totally in the dark about how their cattle feed out and grade. They consigned steer calves to the Southwest Missouri Steer Futurity during the 1980s. The futurity was an educational experience for feeding small groups of steers. Retaining ownership of a larger group of steers and heifers, however, would give the Kleemans more ammunition to

work with in making breeding selections within their herd.

By the fall of 1992 they were ready for the real thing — feeding cattle in a large, commercial feedlot.

“The calves we are feeding out are ones we cull off, rather than keep for herd replacements or breeding stock, so they don’t represent our top cattle,” Leon explains. “Still, the carcass information is valuable in our breeding management; perhaps as much in our cow selection as progeny information for our herd sires.”

The Kleemans have added no new females to their herd in nearly 20 years. As a result, they own some cow “families” with several generations of producing females. The feedlot and carcass information, coupled with herd records on Gleonda Farms’ cows, gives the Kleemans more thorough data by which to select replacement heifers.

Quality assurance

Here’s how the Kleemans handle the calves they consign to retained ownership finishing. Approximately 30 days before calves are scheduled to go to the feedlot, they contact the feedlot manager for advice on health treatments.

“We perform vaccinations and other health routines the manager recommends,” Leon says. “Then when the cattle arrive at the feedlot, the crew there performs additional health treatments to complement what we had done here on the farm.”

The health of the cattle was good all the way through at the Oklahoma feedlot. So was their performance. Starting weight for the cattle averaged 567 pounds and they finished at an average of 1,097 pounds. They recorded a 2.67-pound average daily gain (ADG) for the 189-day feeding period. This converted to 6.8 pounds of feed to 1 pound of beef. Total feed cost was 47 cents per pound.

At the beef processing plant, all but two of the animals graded Choice, for a 96 percent Choice record. Two-thirds of the heifers and steers were Yield Grade 1 and 2, which accounted for that \$3 per hundredweight premium.

In addition, 67 percent of the Kleemans’ cattle met Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program specifications. However, at the time, IBP’s Emporia plant was not certified with the CAB Program.

“A lot of people had a hand in putting together the carcass and cut-out information for us,” Leon says. “IBP, Kansas State University animal science students, the CAB Program staff and the National Cattlemen’s Association. We received the report in a form that is readable and immediately useable.”



In fact, Kelly Frank of the CAB Program, helped underwrite the cost of the carcass print-out through a contracted service agreement with NCA.

The Kleemans are using the information gleaned from Neill Feedlot and IBP to build EPDs for carcass merit on their herd bulls.

“In the past, we haven’t evaluated our bulls for inclusion in the Angus Sire Summary, but we will start doing this now,” Glenda says. “More commercial cowmen are retaining ownership of their cattle through feedlots and they will need fuller data on bulls.”

Looking to the future

As they retain ownership of more cattle through feedlots in coming years, the Kleemans plan to build a data bank not only on herd sires, but also on their cows and heifers. They have a strong demand for Angus replacement heifers as well as bulls.

“We will continue to feed out the calves we don’t keep for breeding stock,” Leon says. “I don’t expect us to earn \$104 per head profit every year, of course. But as long as we can retain ownership of our cattle and at least break even with the dollars we would have earned on them as weaned calves, they’ll go to the feedlot.”

More than 100 Gleonda Farm steers and heifers boarded a truck for a Kansas feedlot in late October 1993.

“We know they will yield information we need here at the farm,” Glenda says. “That’s a big reason we are feeding out our cattle. Naturally, we aren’t disappointed when they earn a profit, as well.”

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Leon Kleeman unrolls a big bale of hay for his heifers. Feedlot and carcass data are used by the Kleemans to select replacement heifers. The Kleemans pick up \$3 per cwt. premium on finished cattle by selling grade and yield. Last year retained ownership of their cattle increased their profits per head by \$104 over what the cattle would have made if sold at weaning.