

# Inventory Insight

Annual CattleFAX survey reveals U.S. cow herd trends for 2017.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

Calf revenue increased for U.S. cattle producers last year, but so did cow costs. Those are a few findings from the annual cow-calf survey conducted by CattleFAX. The data represents 2017 numbers reported

by cow-calf producers from across the country. CattleFAX conducted a similar survey in 2015 and 2016, which allows for a representative picture of the national herd while also providing an opportunity for

year-to-year comparisons. These are beneficial for future projections.

CattleFAX analyst Ethan Oberst shared the findings from the survey in a CattleFAX webinar that aired in May 2018. [AJ](#)



**527** AVERAGE COW HERD SIZE  
per survey respondent



**\$588.00**  
2016 Cow Cost



**\$603.00**  
2017 Cow Cost

*This was not a surprise due to winter feeding costs as noted by Oberst. 2018 will likely increase due to the tough winter conditions and higher feed costs being seen.*

**Heifer** AVERAGE WEANING WEIGHT **Steer** since 2016  
**533 lb.** **574 lb.** **+7 lb.**

*Oberst speculated this increase may have been due to the adequate grazing conditions that existed across much of the country in 2017.*

Calves born in the first 45 days of calving season averaged 563 pounds (lb.) at weaning. Calves born between the 45 to 60 day interval averaged 548 lbs.

Oberst emphasized calves born earlier wean more pounds, sell more product and bring more return. He also noted that cows calving earlier are in better condition to breed back.

To producers selecting better genetics, Oberst indicated the data shows those calves "put more money in your pocket." But he added, "You need to advertise those genetics when you are selling those calves."

**\$890.00**  
Average Calf Revenue Per Head  
**\$70.00**  
Increase over 2016



**550 lb. CALF** **\$161/cwt.**

**88%** 2018 Respondents planning to maintain or expand their cow herd.  
**94%** 2019 *This was similar to the expansion plans reported in 2016.*

