

Highlights of Beef 2007-08 Part II: Reference of Beef Cow-calf Management Practices in the United States, 2007-08

In 2007-08, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study of U.S. beef cow-calf operations. The Beef 2007-08 study focused on health and management practices on U.S. beef operations from 24 of the Nation's major beef-producing States.* These States represented 79.6 percent of U.S. beef-cow operations and 87.8 percent of U.S. beef cows.

"Beef 2007-08 Part II: Reference of Beef Cow-calf Management Practices in the United States, 2007-08" contains information collected from 2,872 U.S. cow-calf operations. The following are a few highlights excerpted from Part II of the Beef 2007-08 study:

- About one-half of all operations (50.8 percent) consulted a veterinarian for some reason during the previous 12 months. Interaction with a veterinarian was more common among herds with 200 or more cows (82.2 percent) compared with operations with fewer than 50 cows (43.2 percent).
- In general, producers were familiar with specific diseases such as foot and mouth, brucellosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, anthrax, and bovine viral diarrhea. In fact, less than 15 percent of producers had never heard of these diseases. Other diseases—such as rinderpest, vesicular stomatitis, anaplasmosis, Johne's disease, and bluetongue—were not as familiar to producers, with more than 35 percent reporting that they had not heard of these diseases.

* Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wyoming

- During the study, producers were asked about what type of animals had contact with their beef cattle. Contact with wild cervids, horses, and domestic pets was especially prevalent, with more than 40 percent of operations reporting that beef cattle had contact with each of these species during the previous 12 months.
- Of operations that sent cattle to an off-site event for a period of time, 53.6 percent routinely isolated any animals after their return. However, 33.1 percent of operations that sent animals to an off-site event never isolated any returning animals.
- One of three operations (34.5 percent) brought cattle or calves onto the operation during the previous 12 months. Weaned beef bulls were added on the highest percentage of **operations** (19.5 percent) [table 1]. However, weaned steers accounted for the highest percentage of **animals** brought onto the operations (49.9 percent) [table 2].

Table 1. Percentage of Operations that Brought Any Cattle or Calves onto the Operation During the Previous 12 months, by Cattle Class

Cattle Class	Percent Operations
Unweaned beef calves with dam	3.4
Beef heifers weaned, but not bred	6.2
Bred beef heifers	3.5
Beef cows (pregnant)	9.2
Beef cows (not pregnant)	2.6
Weaned beef bulls	19.5
Weaned steers (all types)	3.1
Unweaned dairy calves	0.5
Weaned dairy heifers and cows	0.4
Weaned dairy bulls	0.4
Any	34.5

Table 2. For Operations that Brought Any Cattle or Calves onto the Operation During the Previous 12 Months, Percentage of Cattle Brought on, by Cattle Class

Cattle Class	Percent Operations
Unweaned beef calves with dam	8.0
Beef heifers weaned, but not bred	15.5
Bred beef heifers	4.0
Beef cows (pregnant)	14.4
Beef cows (not pregnant)	3.2
Weaned beef bulls	3.2
Weaned steers (all types)	49.9
Unweaned dairy calves	0.3
Weaned dairy heifers and cows	1.2
Weaned dairy bulls	0.3
Total	100.0

- For operations that brought on any cattle or calves, only 33.7 percent quarantined all or some of the new animals before introduction to the herd.
- The majority of operations (76.3 percent) had commercial cattle (not considered seedstock). On most operations (65.2 percent) at least one-half of the commercial cattle were crossbreds.
- About one-half of operations (54.5 percent) had no set breeding season. However, only 34.1 percent of the cows were on operations with no set breeding season, indicating that this practice is more common on smaller operations.
- Most operations observed heifers and cows regularly during calving (92.7 and 89.0 percent, respectively).
- The majority of cows and heifers (95.0 percent) required no assistance at calving.
- Nearly 6 of 10 calves (58.8 percent) were born from February through April.
- More than 7 of 10 operations (71.3 percent) never used the calving area to hold sick cows.
- Most producers (85.1 percent) were very likely to get information from a private veterinarian in the event of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the United States. By far, the highest percentage of producers would seek information from a private veterinarian during a foreign animal disease

outbreak compared with all other potential sources. By knowing who producers will turn to for information during an emergency, responders are able to target the dissemination routes of information critical to the emergency response effort.

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