

Extension Cattle Call

Stanly County Livestock Market

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Carcass Disposal

Samantha Foster, Livestock Agent, Stanly County

One of the most unpleasant things that a livestock producer has to deal with is carcass disposal in the event that an animal dies on-site. Proper disposal is important for several different reasons. Carrion attracts predatory animals such as coyotes and black vultures, which puts the herd and especially calves at risk. Decomposing remains may also contaminate water sources and expose the herd and wildlife to disease. Additionally, a carcass that is visible by the public may draw unwanted attention. In any case, it is required by law to dispose of a deceased animal within 24 hours of knowledge of passing.

So, what are the options? The first thought for many is burial. For this, the animal has to be at least three feet below the surface of the ground and no closer than 300 feet to any stream or flowing body of water per state general statute. Other methods approved by the state veterinarian include rendering by a licensed facility, land-filling, incineration, and composting. Rendering processes deceased animals into useable products. Ability to use this method will depend on access to such facilities; you will need to contact the one of your choosing to find out what requirements they have and how they operate. If you would like to use a land-fill, it is advisable to call beforehand to make arrangements. Most aren't used to taking carcasses on a regular basis, and the fees associated may be different than fees for other waste. Transportation may also be a barrier to using a landfill, as you will need to be able to load and transport the carcass safely. Incineration is popular for smaller carcasses such as poultry, but may not be practical for larger ones. Incinerators are often not cost-effective for most cattle operations due to initial cost and required maintenance. Composting for large animals is gaining popularity and is environmentally friendly with the bonus of producing a valuable fertilizer. Large animals may be composted in windrows outdoors on compacted ground using a carbon source such as wood chips, sawdust, or straw. Piles of compost will need to be checked regularly and turned periodically. There is a method to doing this correctly, however, so be sure to do your research prior to attempting it on your own. This method also takes a while: possibly up to six months. For further questions about carcass disposal, contact your county agent.

Upcoming Events:



NC State University and N.C. A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual identity (including pregnancy) and veteran status. NC State, N.C. A&T, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

Farm Pasture Clean Out - Strategic Culling

Phil Rucker, Livestock Agent, Davie and Yadkin Counties

Culling is a necessary management practice to improve your herd. Deciding the “Keep/Cull” list impacts future herd performance and profitability. There are many factors to consider when making your cull list. The challenge is to identify the cows that are making the operation money and the cows that are costing the operation money. This is where GOOD RECORDS on ALL ASPECTS of your herd are vital in management decisions, especially culling.

The Beef Quality Assurance program outlines some factors to assess in your culling decisions.

* **Pregnancy Status:** One of the greatest factors of profitability in a cow-calf operation is reproductive rate. Open cows drain resources by consuming feed, forage, and other resources without producing a marketable calf to contribute to expense payments. These freeloaders should be at the top of the cull list.

* **Major Defects:** There are several “defects” to look for and should be candidates for culling.

- **#DISPOSITION!!** Bad temperament/“High-headed” cattle are dangerous, increase the risk of injury for both cattle and people and should be culled. Excitable calves sacrifice Growth, Performance and Quality Grade compared to calmer calves. They “stir up” other calves causing decreased productivity throughout the group.
- **#Cows** with broken or worn teeth show poor condition, despite adequate available nutrients.
- **#Structural soundness** is vital for functionality. Cows that show difficulty moving around the pasture or are lame, are less active grazers. Lameness decreases performance and reproductive efficiency while increasing weight loss, and treatment costs.
- **#Udder soundness** affects milk production, milk consumption, and ultimately calf weaning weights. Weak udder suspension and/or balloon teats usually make it difficult for calves to nurse.
- **#Poor doers** are always thin no matter what you do. There is a higher chance they might not breed back or have health problems.

* **Poor Production:** Poor calf performance usually results from inferior genetics, poor dam milk production, or other factors. Cows pass on inferior genetics and other negative traits to their calves. Remember we sell cattle by the pound, so better production means more pounds you have to sell. Simple enough.

* **Age:** Cull older cows prior to a sharp decline in reproductive, maternal and overall production. The productive lifetime of a beef cow is variable. When teeth, udders, feet, and/or legs are not sound, older cows are prime candidates for culling.

* **Late calvers and Extremes:** For farms with a calving season, late calvers produce lightweight calves that don't fit in with the other calves. Extreme cattle (frame, muscle, off color) produce extremely different calves, decreasing uniformity of the calf crop. Uniform calves are always in higher demand and will command a higher price. Improving uniformity is a simple way to improve your bottom line.

Making informed culling decisions helps maintain a high level of herd performance. ALL cows need to be evaluated.

