

# **IMPLICATIONS TO THE DAIRY INDUSTRY OF THE NATIONAL NON-FED BEEF QUALITY AUDIT**

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Neither beef nor dairy cattle producers spend lots of time thinking of ways to improve the merit of their most valuable byproduct-surplus cows and bulls-but they should.

According to Cattle Fax (1995), sale of cull cows and bulls for slaughter, depending upon the operation, represents 15 to 20% of farm/ranch revenues. And, with no need to spend money to do it, the value of surplus cows and bulls can be enhanced-marginally to markedly-just by paying attention....just by appropriately managing, monitoring and marketing surplus cattle.

Professors and graduate students at Colorado State University, in 1994, conducted a study-The National Non-Fed Beef Quality Audit-using dairy cattle and beef cattle check off funds. The study was designed to identify ways of enhancing value of surplus cows and bulls. The CSU scientists: (a) conducted Face-To-Face Interviews with industry leaders to identify and quantify "quality defects," (b) completed a National Audit At Packing Plants to quantify "quality defects" in the holding pens, on the slaughter floor and in the coolers, and (c) held a Strategy Workshop to identify strategies and tactics for improving quality, consistency and competitiveness of U.S. non-fed beef.

From the Face-To-Face Interviews it was determined that the Top Ten Defects Of Cull Cows And Bulls were: (1) Excessive Bruises, (2) Excessive Condemnation Rates, (3) Excessive Hot-Iron Brands, (4) Too Small Rib eyes In Cow Carcasses, (5) Inadequate Muscling In Cows, (6) Excessive External Fat, (7) Excessively Heavy Live Weights In Bulls, (8) Low Dressing Percentages, (9) Advanced Lameness, and (10) Too Frequent Disease.

Presented in the first accompanying Table is the "Frequency of Defects in Live Cattle, In the Holding Pens at Packing Plants." The breakdown into categories of beef cattle vs. dairy cattle was for informative, not comparative, purposes.

Areas in which dairy cattle producers can make immediate progress to reduce quality defects include: dehorning, moving as many as possible of side and shoulder brands to the upper hip region, lessening scratches and cuts on the hide and getting cull cattle to market (auction or packing plant) before they become too skinny, emaciated or too lame.

Presented in the second accompanying Table is "Quality Losses per Non-Fed Cattle." The \$69.90, average loss due to quality defects for every cull cow/bull sent to harvest in 1994, represents a huge loss to the industry, as a whole, and to the production sector, specifically.

During the Strategy Workshop, ten strategies were identified as means for improving the quality, competitiveness and value of cull cows and bulls and the products they produce. Those are: (1) Minimize Condemnations By Timely Marketing, (2) Accomplish End-Product Improvements, (3) Decrease Hide Damage, (4) Reduce Bruises, (5) Encourage Competitiveness & Accountability, (6) Assure Equity In Salvage Value By Equalizing Plant-To-Plant FSIS Inspection, (7) Ensure Beef Safety (especially its microbiological safety), (8) Prevent Chemical Residues & Injection-Site Lesions, (9) Enhance Price Discovery and (10) Encourage On-Farm Euthanasia Of Downer Animals And Animals With Advanced Cases Of Cancer Eye.

In summary, of the \$69.90 for every cull cow/bull harvested...cattle persons could recover: \$14.60 by managing cattle, to minimize defects and quality deficiencies, \$27.65 by monitoring cattle, to ascertain their health and condition, and \$27.65 by marketing cull and surplus cattle in a timely manner. Additional information and a bulletin entitled "The National Non-Fed Beef Quality Audit; Special Section: Dairy Cattle" can be obtained by writing Dr. Gary L. Cowman or Michael T. Smith, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, PO Box 3316, Englewood, CO 80155.

**Table One: Frequency of Defects in Live Cattle in the Holding Pens at Packing Plants**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Beef %</b>	<b>Dairy %</b>
Low Muscling	37.4	57.5
Low Body Condition	3.5	4.6
High Body Condition	8.6	3.0
Severe Cancer Eye	1.6	0.3
Moderate Cancer Eye	2.0	0.0
Prolepses	1.2	0.2
Udder/Teat Problems	5.0	14.5
Sheath Damage	10.2	5.3
Knots/Abscesses	5.8	13.4
Horns	24.2	11.9
Scratches/Cuts On Hides	26.3	34.1
Insect Damage On Hides	7.8	11.5
Side Brands On Hides	30.1	4.8
Shoulder/Hip Brands On Hides	24.9	13.6
Multiple Brands On Hides	27.9	3.0
Downer Cattle	0.9	1.3
Stifled Cattle	3.4	5.8
Lumpy Jaw	1.9	0.6

**Table Two: Quality Losses per Non-Fed Cattle**

Whole Cattle/Carcass Condemnation	\$11.99
Carcass Cooking & Parts Removed	\$2.16
Carcass Loss-"Zero Tolerance (FSIS)"	\$1.87
Condemnations of Edible Offal	\$3.99
Hide Loss; Brands/Scratches/Insects/Disease	\$6.92
Injection-Site Lesions	\$0.66
Bruise Trim (Includes Primal Devaluation)	3.91
Disabled Cattle & Dark Cutters	\$0.84
Yellow External Fat	\$2.27
Inadequate Muscling	\$14.43
Excess External Fat	\$17.74
Light Carcasses (Includes Primal Devaluation)	\$3.12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$69.90</b>