

# 2023 Hereford Feedout Findings

A look at results from 2023 Hereford Feedout Program and Fed Steer Shootout.

by *Sydnee Shive*

See a need, fill a need. That's what the American Hereford Association (AHA) did in 2019 when it enrolled the first cattle into programs offering Hereford breeders and commercial users of Hereford genetics the opportunity to follow their cattle from the feedlot through the packinghouse.

AHA's Hereford Feedout Program and the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer Shootout provide participants of all ages a deeper understanding of the cattle feeding industry and the opportunity to maximize their profit potential and expand marketing avenues. Feedlot performance information and carcass data enable participants to benchmark quality genetics and make informed future selection decisions.

A little more than 100 head were enrolled by producers in 2019. In 2023, Hereford breeders and commercial users of Herefords sent more than 1,000 head to HRC Feed Yards in Scott City, Kan. Data from this year's set of cattle was presented and discussed at the 2023 AHA Annual Membership Meeting and Educational Forum.

## The numbers

Live performance and carcass results from 845 steers and 173 heifers from 22 states were analyzed. Carcass prices were computed using current grid premiums and discounts.

Sex, age and weight account for most of the variation amongst the cattle enrolled. Some calves entered the feedyard weighing 500 pounds, while others entered the feedyard weighing almost 1,000 pounds. The youngest animal was 180 days old, and the oldest animal was 480 days. Older, heavier cattle at the beginning of the trial gained weight faster, while producing a heavier, higher

Summary of 2023 Hereford Feedout Program results		
	Heifers	Steers
Number of head	173	845
Weight gained	659 lbs.	709 lbs.
Average daily gain	3.38 lbs.	3.89 lbs.
Hot carcass weight	821 lbs.	913 lbs.
Estimated live weight	1,292 lbs.	1,420 lbs.
Marbling	470	449
Ribeye area	13.97 in. <sup>2</sup>	15.01 in. <sup>2</sup>
Fat thickness	0.77 in.	0.73 in.
Yield grade	2.90	2.75
Carcass revenue	\$2,325.93	\$2,611.83
Carcass value, per cwt.	\$283.15	\$285.58

Data prepared by Midwest PMS LLC.

quality carcass, with more external fat. Steers performed better than heifers, generating more revenue (dollars per head) and increased value.

Steer calves entered the feedlot at an average age of 287 days and weight of 710 pounds, with a weight per day of age (WDA) of 2.49 pounds. Steers hung an average hot carcass weight (HCW) of 913 pounds and had an average daily gain of 3.89 pounds. Steer carcasses averaged 15.01 square inches for ribeye with 0.73

inches of external fat. More than 70% of steers graded Choice or Prime, with an average yield grade of 2.75.

When looking at the heifers, the average age entering the feedlot was 283 days, with a weight of 639 and WDA of 2.21 pounds. Heifers had an average HCW of 821 pounds and gained an average of 3.38 pounds per day. Heifer carcasses averaged 13.97 square inches for ribeye area, with 0.77 inches of external fat. The heifers graded Choice on average with a 2.9 yield grade.

When compared to heifers, steers produced heavier carcasses with larger ribeyes. The steers were heavier and gained faster compared to their female contemporaries. Their yield grades were lower, at 2.75. The number of yield grade 4 and 5 carcasses was above industry average, with 23% of heifers and 20% of steers.

Quality grades in the Hereford Feedout Program were on par with the overall industry with 72% of steers and 81% of heifers grading Choice or Prime. However, the percentage of carcasses grading Prime were less than industry average. Increased marbling with less external fat (lower yield grades) represents opportunities for genetic improvement.

## Takeaways

Poor health was the primary driver of inferior feedlot and carcass performance, as it is across the industry. Effective vaccination protocols and health management are foundational to performance in the feedlot and to ultimate carcass acceptability on the rail.

“That’s why we encourage people to vaccinate cattle,” says Garrett Parsons, Midwest PMS LLC. “Do everything you can to deliver the healthiest animal possible, so we can give it the best chance to thrive in the feedyard setting and then thrive on the rail for the packers and your bottom dollar.”

Older, bigger cattle tend to have fewer health issues, perform better and hang heavier carcasses. Dollars are left on the table when light cattle are sent to the feedyard.

Hereford breeders have heavy-muscled cattle with larger-than-expected ribeye areas for their size. The efficiency experts bring pounds of red meat to the rail.

## Participate, participate, participate

Benefits of participating in the program are multifold. Individual producers discover essential feedlot performance information and carcass data associated with the genetics they are using. This information also contributes to increasing accuracy of the breed’s genetic evaluation. Plus, participants unable to market load lots of fed cattle can also avoid the discount often applied to smaller groups of cattle.

“Not only do you get all the data back, not only do you learn about your genetics, but by co-mingling with us and doing what we’re doing, you are now moving up to the full pen cattle price,” explains Lee Mayo, general manager, HRC Feed Yards. “Even if the market goes a hundred dollars the wrong way, it’s probably still going to be better for those who send 10 to 15, 20 head.”

In other words, there is economic power in numbers.

“We can add money back to smaller producers’ pockets. If you have 20 head of steers to sell, I think we can actually get more money for you by feeding these cattle and putting them in this program,” Mayo says.

## In 2024

The 2024 Fed Steer Shootout Field Day is scheduled for April 13, at HRC Feed Yards in Scott City. Attendees can see their cattle on feed and participate in educational sessions.

The deadline for entering the 2024 NJHA Fed Steer Shootout has passed, but if producers have pen groups, (more than 50 head) delivery to HRC Feed Yards can be arranged at any time.

Find more information about the Fed Steer Shootout and Hereford Feedout Program at [Hereford.org](https://www.hereford.org). **BA**