

Studies show that the average beef cow herd is comprised of 40 head of cattle. To create one load lot of calves weighing 650 pounds each, 75 calves, or a total of 50,000 pounds must be available. For the average herd consisting of only 40 head, this is impossible. This week we will explain how to overcome the challenge of amassing enough cattle to create one 50,000 pound lot. We will also discuss methods that can be used to arrange to have the cattle loaded when it comes time to ship them.

The key to creating a load lot of cattle is to ensure that it is made up of “like” cattle in terms of gender, breed, weight, size, and body condition. The more uniform that the lot is will result in more of an opportunity for a higher return when the cattle are sold. If you do not have enough “like” calves of your own to create a load lot, it is a prerequisite to network with people in your area that have calves similar to yours. Once you locate producers that have similar calves and want to create a load lot, the calves from each herd may be preconditioned, and then combined to create one load lot. This may not only help reduce shipping and other costs by splitting with other producer(s), but may increase your income as well because the calves will be sold for load lot price. Another option for producers that do not have enough weaned calves to create a load lot is to hold them over, and put weight on them economically. Then, when the calves have totaled about 50,000 pounds they may be grouped and sold as a lot (i.e. it only takes 65 calves weighing 800 pounds each to equal a 50,000 pound lot). Remember, a lot is not dependent upon the number of calves in the lot. Rather, it is the total number of pounds that the lot weighs.

One other concern some producers have with load lot marketing is the question of “How can the cattle be loaded on the truck for selling?” Perhaps the simplest solution to this is to rent a portable ramp from a neighboring producer or company. If this does not seem desirable, some producers in the area already have the facilities to load and ship large groups of cattle. These producers may be willing to lease their facilities so that you may have an efficient method of loading your cattle, and haul them all at one time for shipping.

Though load lots do come with some challenges, we do not believe they are so big that they should prevent you from this method of marketing. One of the best ways to overcome these challenges is to network with other producers who have the same goals for their operations. In the coming weeks we will attempt to help you get in contact with producers such as these so that your operations may be profitable. With adequate care, we believe that load lot marketing can be implemented in your operation in a manner that supports your reputation as a cattle producer, and increases the productivity of your operation. For more on load lot marketing, or for help with finding a producer to create a load lot with, please contact us.

Thanks,
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