

# Inventory Selection For Texas Longhorn Beef

*Note: This is the second installment for the Trails by Darol Dickinson which will detail plans for a profitable business with Texas Longhorn retail beef sales, locating processors, building your own business, market development, expanding the ranch acreage, meat distribution and nutritional advantages over other breeds of cattle.*

**D**on't misunderstand! As these articles deal with developing a successful Texas Longhorn beef retail market it in no way diminishes the great profitability of top end registered breeding stock. Marketing of lean Texas Longhorn (TL) beef is where every producer harvests the highest profits from the bottom half of the herd, not using the very highest quality, trophy horned, beautifully colored cattle. Okay? The high dollar, registered cattle are the top of the best of this business and it will not change.

Sorting inventory is the first job. For meat products the steers and bulls gain faster, and produce more beef than heifers. The fact is that only one bull is needed per 40 females; this works out perfect. There is a lot of male inventory that don't make the herd sire selection. Sort bull calves at weaning into 1) herd sire prospects, 2) exhibition show steers, 3) feeder meat steers and 4) roper/recreational steers.

1) Keep as many of the best bull calves as you have a market for. If you have not advertised registered bulls for sale and have no idea of who a buyer will be, the number should be very small or zero. With the good prices of TL beef, most male calves are worth more as feeder steers than bulls. This is a fact! If a mistake is made by keeping too many bulls, they can be castrated with a bander up to 2 years. Never castrate with a knife. Avoid any process with cattle that causes blood. When cattle bleed, and blood drips to the ground, dollars will fall out of your pockets – believe it!

2) The exhibition steer market will be steers with exceptionally large horn. Additional value is created with wild pretty colors. They do not have to have the correct conformation of a herd sire. The exhibition steer market is a slow one and probably will not yield a good profit as quick as a freezer beef steer. They are fun to own, ride and the really nice ones can bring a lot of money as

pasture ornaments.

3) Feeder steers can be any color with some variations in conformation, but, **MUST** have good growth genetics. They need to be tall, thick, with large bone and good big frames. This type will gain economically, and make more profit. They can have record horn genetics or the worst horn in the pasture – it makes no difference.

4) Recreational steers are the smaller ones. Maybe from old cows or very young cows. These are the steers that are fine boned, light muscled and only good for rodeo use. A really good roper is not a good feeder and a good feeder gets too big too quick for a good roper. Roping steers can be flawed conformation, solid colors, a little silly, or all of the above. The recreational market is also a place to sell small cull heifers who are not up to speed for registered breeding stock. This market can be directed to steer ropers, team penners or cutters.

This four way inventory selection is very important. Due to various genetics certain herds will evolve stronger into these different divisions. To move a herd from a high percent of ropers up to a higher percent of feeders most often will require a genetic change to thicker herd sires. Considerations of the profit from a \$400 to \$600 roper up to a fed steer, ready for retail consumption at over \$2000, is a financial factor to take seriously.

Departing from in-herd inventory selection, thousands of TL cattle sell privately or at auction for prices within a profitable range for processing meat. Often at the local cattle auctions, where generic critters are liquidated, TL cattle sell for discounted prices. This is a profit opportunity to add these TL cattle to the home raised stock for meat sales. To evaluate these different types and sizes, here is what can be expected for retail meat sales. Some will weigh more or less and some will sell meat for higher or lower prices. Use these numbers to start accumulating your own exact data.



This fine boned heifer is not good for breeding stock, too large to rope, not profitable to put on feed for freezer beef. No one is going to make very much money with her and yet to allow her to continue to eat costly grain and or hay is not a pleasant alternative. Here is her data:

*Live weight – 510 lbs.*

*Generic auction value 510 lbs. X \$.35 = \$178.50 less commission, hauling, Beef Checkoff.*

*Hanging weight 231 lbs. or 45.29% of live weight.*

*Lean trim weight 27% of live weight = 138 lbs.*

*Ground beef 138 lbs. X \$5 per lb. retail value = \$690*

*Process cost, kill fee \$64 + cut and wrap at \$.50 per lb. = \$179.50*

*Process cost \$179.50 subtracted from retail grind sales = \$510.50*

*Retail grind net \$510.50 less generic auction value \$178.50 = \$332 additional income*



This traditional size TL cow is fine boned and a normal size for many adult cows.

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Live weight – 710 lbs.

Generic auction value 710 lbs. X \$.50 = \$355

Hanging weight 348 lbs. or 49% of live weight

Lean trim weight 31% of live weight = 220 lbs.

Ground beef 220 lbs. X \$5 per lb. retail value = \$1100

Process costs, kill fee \$64 + cut and wrap at \$.50 per lb. = \$238

Process costs \$238 subtracted from retail grind sales = \$862

Retail grind net \$862 less generic auction value \$355 = \$507 additional income



This traditional trophy steer has some age, but does press down the scales.

Live weight – 1610 lbs.

Generic auction value 1610 lbs. X \$.50 = \$805

Hanging weight 757 lbs. or 47% of live weight

Lean trim weight 29% of live weight = 467 lbs.

Ground beef 467 lbs. X \$5 per lb. retail value = \$2335

Process costs, kill fee \$64 + cut and wrap at \$.50 per lb. = \$442.50

Process costs \$442.50 subtracted from retail grind sales = \$1892.50

Retail grind net \$1892.50 less generic auction value \$805 = \$1087.50 additional



income

This large cow is 15 years old and has failed to breed. She is considered a "volunteer." Many people have a herd

rule which is, either the cow produces a good calf, or she donates herself. Either way there is income for the owner to recover boarding expenses.

Live weight – 1430 lbs.

Generic auction value 1430 lbs. X \$.80 = \$1144

Hanging weight 772 lbs. or 54% of live weight

Lean trim weight 37% of live weight = 529 lbs.

Ground beef 529 lbs X \$5 per lb. retail value = \$2645

Process costs, kill fee \$64 + cut and wrap at \$.50 per lb. = \$450

Process costs \$450 subtracted from retail grind sales = \$2195

Retail grind net \$2195 less generic auction



value \$1144 = \$1051 additional income

This bull had great early beef gain and size, yet failed to grow wide, large lateral horn. He was bred 2 years due to great beef quality.

Live weight – 2090 lbs.

Generic auction value 2090 lbs. X \$.95 = \$1985.50

Hanging weight 1212 lbs. or 58% of live weight

Lean trim weight 39% of live weight = 815 lbs.

Ground beef 815 lbs. X \$5 per lb. retail value = \$4075

Process costs, kill fee \$64 + cut and wrap at \$.50 per lb. = \$670

Process costs \$670 subtracted from retail grind sales = \$3405

Retail grind net \$3405 less generic auction value \$1985.50 = \$1419.50

Everyone is encouraged to negotiate the best quality of processing possible. Develop data and know the data that fits your business plan. Beyond the raw data, here are some concluding recommendations for a more profitable TL lean beef business.

Ground beef from old fat steers has a slightly greasy texture when processed. Old cows have a slightly watery meat which goes with less firmness in the muscle. Some very poor lean

cows are actually too lean. The solution is a blend of young bulls, steers and cows. A blend of 6 to 10 animals makes an ideal grind product. A good processor will do this blend to your specifications.

Poor bulls or cows are often grain fed a month or two before processing. This is costly, reduces the omega 3 and adds fat, which is not wanted nor needed. Use these cattle for a blend grind and go right from pasture to the processing plant.

If a steer is retained as an exhibition steer and doesn't grow outstanding horn, grind him. A 3 or 4 year old steer is a choice grind product. He is worth more as grass fed grind at this age than if he was grain fed. He is too old to develop tender steaks.

Historically corn fed beef is the juicy, tender and a melt-in-our-mouth product. Although it is often an enjoyable eating experience the percent of omega 3 remaining after being fed 200 days will be zero or close to none. Either raise corn fed, melt-in-your-mouth with no omega 3 health benefits, or grass fed with healthy nutrition. It is difficult to have both virtues. Grind the grass fed and it will be tender, flavorful and healthy.

Angus producers have warned for 50 years of the horrible, awful, terrible damage to carcasses from horn wounds, punctures and bruising. After feeding TL steers in lots for 16 years, with horns, I asked our processors if they had trimmed any bruised muscle from our steers? In 16 years they said it was not a problem – none had been trimmed off. This is because of two things, 1) never let the feed trough get empty; steers can eat 24 hours a day and never have to fight for feed, 2) raise gentle cattle that are easy to handle and easy on themselves. Lesson – never automatically believe the competitor's criticism.

It is a very good thing for breeders to be feeders. If owners know which bloodlines of cattle gain economically, it will quickly affect the herd breeding decisions. Experience in tests of TL cattle have revealed that on full feed some steers gain as little as .8 of a pound per day and others gain up to 3.8 lbs. The person who is buying the feed will soon get real serious about which bloodlines they like. Try it – keep records. Learn – enjoy what you learn.