



BEEF CATTLE PRODUCTION CYCLE

Ranchers and farmers work hard everyday to produce high quality beef that Americans love. Today's farmers and ranchers combine new best practices with time honored family traditions.

DID YOU KNOW?

All Beef Cattle eat forages (pasture, hay) throughout their entire life cycle.

COW/CALF STAGE

Birth to 9 months

The lifecycle begins with the cow-calf operators. These farmers maintain a herd of mama cows for breeding.

PRENATAL CARE

Mama cows are carefully monitored by Ranchers and Veterinarians. Gestation period is 9 months.



CALVING

Mama cows give birth to one calf per year. At birth a calf weighs between 60 to 100 pounds.

CALF DIET/CARE

Newborn calves spend the first few months drinking their mother's milk and grazing on pasture grasses.

Just like children, calves are vaccinated against disease.

Calves are weaned at 6 to 9 months and weigh 400 to 600 pounds.

STOCKER STAGE

Up to 18 months

Young cattle are sold to a backgrounder or stocker, where they will continue to grow and gain weight.



HIGH-PROTEIN DIET

Cattle spend time eating a high-protein, low-energy diet until they weigh about 700 to 900 pounds.



FINISHING STAGE

Harvested around 20 to 24 months

At the feedyard, cattle are gaining weight - adding the marbling that delivers high quality beef.



HIGH-ENERGY DIET

Cattle eat a combination of forage and grain as part of a high-energy diet, created by animal nutritionists. Cattle continue on that diet until ready for harvest at 1,100 to 1,500 pounds.

Sources:

- <http://factsaboutbeef.com/category/animal-care/>
- http://www.explorebeef.org/CMDocs/ExploreBeef/FactSheet_ModernBeefProduction.pdf
- <http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1728096/eib-132.pdf>
- <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/ag101/printbeef.html#cycle>
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