

Abstract: MN Nutrition Conference 2022

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Movement and Management in Minnesota's Beef Industry: Results of a Survey of MN Cow-calf and Feedlot Producers (2020/2021), analyzed the beef industry in Minnesota (MN) to determine how beef cattle are raised, retained on farm sites, and moved within the system. The University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Minnesota Beef Council, anticipates the report will provide valuable information on the movement of beef cattle from birth to harvest. The types of questions initially posed by the Minnesota Beef Council included the following: How are beef cattle moved in MN? What proportion of producers send their calves to backgrounding vs an auction market vs feedlot vs pasture-based system? Do producers favor certain pathways more than others? The preliminary results of the report were primarily based on published data, literature, producer interviews, and results from an online survey conducted in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021. A total of 377 responses were submitted before the survey closed in April of 2021. The study was able to gain responses from producers in 78 of the 87 counties in MN. Producers were asked questions regarding their operation style, and how they precondition, wean, market, and harvest their cattle. This survey confirmed the distribution of cattle in relation to operation size. The majority of the owner/operators involved in the industry are represented by small operations, while the majority of cattle are represented by large operations. The support and programmatic needs of each operation size is often drastically different. Finding a balance in providing support and educational programming and prioritizing needs for the entire industry could prove difficult given these distinct populations. The production of the bottom 10% of producers in MN is disproportionately low compared to other states in the region, prioritizing foundational knowledge of management and health care for cattle could improve the MN beef industry more than prioritizing programming that focuses on cutting edge technology and practices. Most interestingly, 62% of the survey respondents described their primary cattle operation as cow-calf production. Of those reporting cow-calf production as their primary cattle operation, only 21% indicated that their cattle operation is their primary source of income. This was similar to survey respondents who described their primary cattle operation as feedlot production (18.5% of total respondents), where only 35% of those reporting feedlot production as their primary cattle operation indicated their cattle operation is their primary source of income. Several management trends found in this report will dictate how veterinarians, nutritionists, and other industry stakeholders interact with their beef clients in MN. The report will also influence the applied research topics the University of Minnesota pursues moving forward.