

**Iowa Beef Producer Profile, 2005:
A Survey of Iowa Cow-Calf and Feedlot Owners by the Iowa Beef Center¹**

Executive Summary

In January 2005 the Iowa Beef Center, in conjunction with Iowa Cattlemen's Association, surveyed two groups of Iowa cattle producers regarding their current operation, how they receive information, and what they saw as the greatest opportunities and obstacles for the state's cattle sector. The goal of the study was to better understand current marketing and management practices, the highest priorities for research, education, and policy, and how producers receive information. Iowa Agricultural Statistics identified operations reporting to have at least 100 beef cow and/or capacity for 500 or more feedlot cattle and 1250 surveys were sent to each group of producers. The results reported are based on usable surveys from 347 cowherds and 326 feedlots. While there was not a large enough sample to make general statements for all producers, the results do provide some insight into Iowa's beef producers and their concerns.

Profile

These operations represented were larger than average, with 152 beef cow and 1752 fed cattle marketed. The average age of respondents was 52 years with a range of 24-89, and 53% were between 45 and 65. These operators were primarily full-time farmers as less than 10% of their time was spent at an off-farm job. However, approximately two-thirds of the spouse's time was spent at an off-farm job. Approximately 60% of the operations expected to have a son or daughter continue the operation in the future. The biggest obstacle for cowherds was identified as available or additional land as they faced competition from CRP and conversion of pasture to crop ground. Feedlots identified environmental regulations that their largest obstacle to future success.

Practices

Over 80% of the calves were born in March, April, and May; and changing the calving date was next to last of changes a cowherd would make to improve marketing opportunities. The majority of cowherds support the national identification program and are willing to change their animal identification, vaccination, genetics, and data collection program to improve marketing opportunities.

The majority of the cowherds responding retain ownership of their calves. Thirty percent of the 2003 calves were backgrounded 60 days or more and another 30% were retained through slaughter. Only 13% were sold at or shortly after weaning. Of the herds that sold feeder cattle, 40% provided buyers a vaccination history and 25% weaned the calves and started them on feed. However, after price, feedlots identified these two as the most important characteristics they look for in feeder cattle. The feedlots surveyed reported that 32% of the fed cattle marketed in 2004 were of Iowa origin. After Iowa and the Northern Plains, the largest sources of feeder cattle were South Dakota, Missouri, and the Southeast. Over 60% of the cattle marketed in 2004 were purchased through an order buyer.

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Over 70% of the feedlots surveyed were feeding corn coproducts, but only 28% of the cowherds were. Feedlots were most commonly feeding wet gluten feed or distillers grains while cowherds were more often feeding dry gluten feed or distillers grains. Both groups hauled the product an average of nearly 70 miles. The biggest disadvantage to these products was storage and the greatest advantage was price and performance.

Few of the feedlots participating in the survey have reduced their size in recent years. Fifty percent have increased and 37% have remained the same size in the last five years. Feedlot profitability and using the feedlot as an effective way to market corn were cited as reasons for growth. Nearly two-thirds of the feedlots growing have added pen space. Sixty percent of those decreasing in size cited low profitability as the reason for the cut back suggesting that there are still large differences in Iowa feedlots. Forty percent indicated that environmental regulations were the reason for reducing their size.

Twenty-two percent of the respondents custom feed cattle for other owners in their feedlot. The operator still owns the largest percentage of the cattle they feed, and over three-fourths of the custom cattle owners live within 50 miles of the feedlot. Relatively few of the cattle are owned by out-of-state customers. Approximately 14% of the Iowa cattle feeders also fed cattle in other states. Services offered and feedlot management were identified as the most important reasons for feeding outside Iowa.

Priorities

Participants were asked to identify the three highest research, education, and policy priorities regarding their cattle operation. For research, cattle health was identified as the highest for both groups. Under education, feedlots chose financial and marketing while cowherds selected genetic selection. The highest policy priority for both groups was environmental issues. Other topics that ranked highly in one or more categories include cattle nutrition and beef quality.

Both cowherd and feedlot operators identified trade magazines and newsletters as their most important source of management information. Radio and TV were their most important source of marketing information. Electronic delivery such as email and internet rated very poorly. When asked how they would like to receive information and education in the future weekday workshops were the top choice followed by correspondence courses. Internet classes, weekend workshops, and 2-3 day intensive workshops were rated poorly. The unfavorable acceptance of internet delivery has implications as universities, government, and industry move to more dependence on the internet to reduce delivery costs.

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The Iowa beef industry is a large, important, and diverse sector of the state’s agricultural economy. According to USDA, there were 32,000 farms in Iowa with cattle and calves in 2004 – approximately a third of the state’s farms. Beef cows were on 25,000 farms and there were cattle on feed on nearly 11,000 farms. In the winter of 2005, the Iowa Beef Center in conjunction with Iowa Cattlemen’s Association surveyed two groups of Iowa producers regarding their current operation, plans for the future, how they receive information, and what they saw as the greatest opportunities and obstacles for the state’s cattle sector. The goal of the project is to better understand:

- What management and marketing practices are currently used by producers.
- What are the highest priorities for research, extension education, and policy related to their cattle operation.
- How and where they get information now and their preferences for information and education in the future.

Working with the Iowa Agricultural Statistics, comparable surveys were sent to 1250 cowherds, one-half of the herds identified as having at least 100 beef cows and all 1250 feedlots that are listed as having 500 head feedlot capacity. Three hundred fifty-seven people responded to the cow calf survey, 347 said that they had beef cattle or calves during 2004. Three hundred fifty-three people responded to the feedlot survey, 326 of the respondents stated that they fed cattle for the slaughter market in 2004. The follow tables and text summarize the highlights of the survey.

Demographics

Respondents were asked what county their operation was located in. The data was then divided into five regions: Central, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast. The most responses were from the Southwest for the cow calf group and from the Northwest for the feedlot respondents (Table 1).

Table 1. Operation location (percentage)	Central	NW	NE	SW	SE
Cow Calf	11.3	15.0	12.7	36.1	24.9
Feedlot	7.7	48.3	16.1	11.8	16.1

Respondents were asked the approximate size of their farm operation (Table 2). Cow calf respondents’ data stated that their average farm operation was 583 acres of row crops, 442 acres of hay and pasture, 172 fed cattle marketed, and 152 cows in cow/calf herd. Feedlot respondents’ data stated that their average farm operation was 1059 acres of row crops, 241 acres of hay and pasture, 1752 fed cattle marketed, and 163 cows in cow/calf herd.

Table 2. The approximate size of the farm operation(s) in 2004 (percentage)	Cow-Calf				
	< 100	100-250	250-500	500-1000	over 1000
acreage of row crops	10.8	21.6	26.3	27.0	14.3
acreage in hay & pasture	12.6	20.7	40.2	20.4	0.1
number of fed cattle marketed	44.1	36.9	16.2	1.7	1.1
number of cows in cow/calf herd	21.8	70.0	7.6	0.6	0.0
The approximate size of the farm operation(s) in 2004 (percentage)	Feedlot				
	< 100	100-500	500-1000	1000-5000	over 5000
acreage of row crops	2.3	22.3	35.3	39.8	0.3
acreage in hay & pasture	57.7	33.9	5.2	2.8	0.4
number of fed cattle marketed	3.1	20.1	32.3	39.5	5.0
number of cows in cow/calf herd	56.6	37.7	4.9	0.8	0.0

The average age of the respondents was 52, the youngest respondent was 24 and the oldest was 89 (Table 3). About one-third of respondents were between 45 and 55 while over half were between 45 and 65 years old.

Table 3. Operator	< 25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65	65-75	over 75
Age (percentage)	years	years	years	years	years	years	years
Cow Calf	0.3	5.5	22.8	33.5	25.1	10.7	2.0
Feedlot	0.6	5.9	25.9	34.7	18.4	9.4	5.0

Participants were asked what percent of time they and other members of their operation spent on livestock, crops, and off-farm jobs. The average responses for both cow calf and feedlot participants responded that over half of their time was spent on livestock, over 60% of their spouse's time was spent on off-farm jobs, and the majority of their hired labor's time was spent on livestock. Other family members from the cow calf respondents spent the majority of their time on off-farm jobs while other family members from the feedlot respondents spent the majority of their time on livestock (Table 4). The reference to hired labor working off-farm suggests that the person has a full or part time job off farm and works part time on the farm.

Table 4. Percent of the time spent working in each category	Cow Calf				Feedlot			
	Operator	Spouse	Other family members	Hired labor	Operator	Spouse	Other family members	Hired labor
Livestock	52	17	34	47	58	22	48	57
Crops	36	11	25	37	36	13	32	34
Off-farm Job	12	72	41	16	6	65	20	9

Seventy-two percent of the cow calf respondents stated that they or their spouse worked off the farm during 2004, and 58% of the feedlot respondents stated that they or their spouse worked off the farm (Table 5). From the cow calf respondents, the operator worked an average of 29 hours

per week off the farm, the most one respondent worked was 90 hours, and the spouse worked an average of 38 hours. From the feedlot respondents, the operator worked an average of 25 hours per week off the farm, the most one respondent worked was 75 hours, and the spouse worked an average of 34 hours. Approximately 80% of the operators of either enterprise worked more than 5 hours off farm.

Table 5. Hours worked off-farm per week in 2004 (percentage)	< 5	5-10	10-20	20-40	over 40
Cow Calf Operator	19.6	7.1	16.1	32.1	25.0
Cow Calf Spouse	1.8	2.3	7.8	63.9	24.2
Feedlot Operator	20.3	18.6	15.3	25.4	20.3
Feedlot Spouse	2.3	5.2	14.4	58.6	19.5

When the cow-calf respondents were asked if the off-farm jobs impacted their ability to manage their cow herd, the average response was that there was no impact but they were stretched thin during peak labor periods (Table 6).

Table 6. Impact of off-farm job held by operator or spouse in the ability to manage cow-calf herd (percentage)	
No impact	38.1
No impact because I have part-time available labor	12.1
No impact, but I get stretched thin during peak labor demand periods	33.6
Yes impacted, because I have no additional available labor	13.8
Other (please specify)	2.2

The majority of both groups of respondents stated that a son or daughter will take over the cattle operation eventually. But 42% of cow calf respondents and 38% of feedlot respondents stated that it is not likely that their cattle operation will be passed down to family (Table 7).

Table 7. Operator anticipation that a son or daughter will take over and continue cattle operation in the next: (percentage)	5 yrs	10 yrs	10+ yrs	Not likely
Cow Calf	12.8	16.9	28.0	42.3
Feedlot	17.8	15.3	28.1	38.8

The respondents belong to several organizations in their community and state. Table 8 summarizes the responses to the list provided to the participants and the most common write in responses.

Table 8. Respondent membership in organizations (percentage)	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Iowa Cattlemen’s Association	62.4	84.2
National Cattlemen’s Beef Association	19.8	40.7
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation	62.7	69.4
County Extension Council	4.1	2.5
School Board	2.4	5.7
Cooperative Board of Directors	5.6	9.5
Other (please specify)	17.2	15.8
R-Calf (write in)	0.6	6.3

Producers were asked to rate the following issues on what, if any, impact they have on their ability to make a profit in the cattle business. Table 9 reports the results for cow-calf and feedlot respondents that rated the issues as having a positive (1), no (2), or negative (3) impact on profitability. Both groups identified new production technologies has having the largest positive impact followed by ability to manage risk with futures and options. The largest negative impact was land values and government regulations. Land values were more of a negative impact for cow-calf operations and regulations were more of a negative impact for feedlots.

Table 9. How much each of the following issues impacts the ability to make a profit in the cattle business either positively or negatively. 1= Positive; 2= No Impact; 3= Negative								
	Cow-Calf			Feedlot				
	Average Response	Number of Responses			Average	Number of Responses		
		1	2	3		1	2	3
Ability to manage price risk with futures/options	1.84	94	203	40	1.61	158	124	34
Your current debt level	1.97	94	164	84	1.87	115	128	74
Government regulations	2.31	51	131	155	2.49	44	72	199
Government feed grain programs	1.78	136	141	62	1.62	153	130	34
Conservation Reserve Program	2.23	62	137	141	2.01	45	223	47
New production technologies	1.34	233	95	10	1.30	227	78	8
Land values	2.46	62	61	218	2.31	51	113	148
Availability of quality labor	2.11	51	202	89	2.03	65	179	73
Attitudes of your neighbors	1.89	80	219	43	1.94	62	208	44

Research, Education, and Policy Priorities

Producers were asked to identify their three most important needs in regard to research, education, and policy that would enhance their operation. Cattle health was the most important research need that both groups of producers identified (Table 10). The feedlot respondents indicated that their education need was in financial and marketing and the cow calf respondents stated that their education need was in genetic selection. Both groups identified environmental protection as the most important policy need.

Table 10. The most important **research/ education/ policy** needs that will enhance the viability and profitability of the cow-calf operation (operators picked three)

	Research		Education		Policy	
	Cow-Calf	Feedlot	Cow-Calf	Feedlot	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Cattle nutrition	10	16	14	18	4	5
Cattle health	20	23	15	20	16	13
Production systems	4	5	7	7	7	8
Genetic selection	19	10	17	7	5	4
Financial and marketing	12	19	16	22	14	18
Forage production	10	2	9	2	4	1
Beef product quality	11	12	9	11	19	18
Environmental protection	4	12	3	11	23	28
Grazing systems	8	1	9	1	4	1
Other (please explain)	2	0	1	1	4	4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Both cow calf and feedlot respondents stated their most important management information source is trade magazines and newsletters; marketing information was gathered through radio and TV. The sources that were used the least by both groups were email and websites and/or internet (Table 11). This has important implications as extension, government, and industry try to go to more electronic delivery to save resources.

Table 11. Operators ranked the following sources of information in importance to their operation. (1 is most important, 6 is least important)

Type of information	Management		Marketing	
	Cow-Calf	Feedlot	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Trade magazines and newsletters	1.96	2.38	2.62	3.37
E-mail	4.77	4.83	4.68	4.82
Website/Internet	4.09	4.18	3.87	3.89
Electronic news service (DTN)	4.18	3.12	3.68	2.31
Meeting/workshop	2.97	3.12	3.59	3.88
Radio/TV	2.92	3.09	2.36	2.48

When asked how they want to receive information and education, cow calf and feedlot respondents stated that they prefer weekday meetings/workshops and correspondence courses. Interactive CD or video classes were the next choice followed by the Internet. The least preferred delivery method was 2-3 day intensive workshops (see Table 12).

Table 12. Operators ranked the following delivery systems for how they would prefer to receive cattle information/education in the future. (1 is most preferable, 6 is least preferable)		
	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Week day meetings/workshops	2.77	2.62
Weekend meetings/workshops	3.78	4.06
2-3 day intensive workshops	4.45	4.30
Internet classes	3.72	3.52
Interactive CD/video/ICN classes	3.28	3.23
Correspondence course by mail	2.90	3.16

Table 13. Percent of calves born by month	
Jan	0.6
Feb	4.8
Mar	25.5
Apr	40.8
May	16.8
Jun	4.3
Jul	1.5
Aug	0.9
Sep	2.5
Oct	1.7
Nov	0.4
Dec	0.0

While we often hear that interest in fall calving is growing, producers responded that over 80% of calves are born in the months of March, April, and May. Approximately 5% of calves were born August-October and only 1% of calves are born in November, December, and January (Table 13).

When asked why they calve when they do, producers stated that the main reason is labor availability, followed by market timing. The response that was written in the most was weather. Table 14 summarizes the results.

Table 14. The main reason operators calve when they do (percentage)	
Labor availability	37.2
Market timing	25.4
Feed availability	7.5
Other	28.2

Cow-calf respondents were asked what changes they would consider doing to expand their marketing opportunities (Table 15). Producers stated that they would consider using an animal identification system and a prescribed genetic selection or vaccination program, but were less interested in changing their calving season or partnering with a feedlot.

Table 15. Changes a cow-calf operation would consider doing (Y) or not consider doing (N) to expand their marketing opportunities (percentage)

	Yes	No
Calving season	55	45
Genetic selection program	88	12
Crossbreeding program	78	22
Partnering in feedlot	44	56
Vaccination program	87	13
Documented herd practices	76	24
Animal identification system	88	12
Marketing schedule	72	28
Type and amount of data collected	80	20

There is an ongoing debate about the amount of preconditioning and retained ownership that occurs, thirty percent of calves sold in 2003 were backgrounded more than 60 days and an additional 30% were retained until slaughter (Table 16). Only 13% sold calves at or shortly after weaning and 21% backgrounded 30-60 days. These cow calf producers market an average of 172 fed cattle and may not be typical of Iowa, therefore the debate may continue.

Table 16. Calves sold in 200. Percentage were:

Sold at weaning or less than 30 days after weaning	12.9
Backgrounded 30 – 60 days	21.2
Backgrounded more than 60 days	31.1
Over-wintered and summer grazed and sold as heavy feeders	4.8
Retained until slaughter	30.0

Forty percent of producers that sold feeder cattle provide the buyers with the cattle's vaccination history. Only ten percent provide specific sire or genetic level information (Table 17). Twenty-six percent of these same producers castrate and vaccinate their cattle prior to selling them (Table 18).

Table 17. Information provided to buyers from respondents that sold cattle (percentage)

Vaccination history	39.8
Breeding background information	22.6
Veterinarians signature confirming routines	27.6
Specific sire/genetic level information	10.0

Table 18. Practices participants perform prior to selling cattle. (percentage)

Weaned and started on feed	24.5
Castrated	26.1
Dehorned	23.2

Coproducts

Only 28% of cow-calf respondents stated that they currently feed corn coproducts to their beef cattle, however over 70% feedlot respondents are feeding corn coproducts (Table 19). The specific coproduct that cow-calf respondents are feeding to their beef cattle the most is dry corn gluten feed. The coproduct that feedlot respondents feed the most is wet corn gluten feed (Table 20). Coproducts are hauled an average of 67 miles from the plant to the producer's operation. Cow-calf respondents stated that price is the primary advantage for feeding coproducts, feedlot respondents stated that performance is the primary advantage. Both groups stated that the primary disadvantage of coproducts is storage (Table 21 and 22).

Table 19. Percentage of respondents that are currently feeding corn coproducts to their beef cattle

	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Yes	27.1	70.8
No	72.9	29.2

Table 20. Specific corn coproducts that participants that feed corn coproducts are using (percentage)

	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Corn gluten feed – WET	22.6	37.4
Distillers grains – WET	11.8	25.8
Distillers solubles (syrup)	11.8	13.2
Corn gluten feed – DRY	38.7	9.5
Distillers grains – DRY	30.1	12.3
Steepwater solubles	2.2	1.5
Modified distillers grains –Partially DRY	2.2	7.7
Other (please specify)	8.6	0.9

Table 21. Average miles corn coproducts are hauled from the plant to the operation

	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
	66.6	69.0
Primary advantage of coproducts (percentage)		
Price	46.6	36.0
Performance	39.8	39.4
Palatability	9.1	18.6
Other (specify)	4.5	3.4

Table 22. Primary disadvantage or limitation of coproducts (percentage)

Price	17.4	17.9
Consistency	11.6	20.3
Storage	65.1	46.9

Other (specify)	5.8	15.5
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Growth and Management

Cow calf respondents stated that their biggest obstacle to expanding their beef cow herd was availability of additional land. Feedlot respondents stated that environmental regulations are their biggest obstacle (Table 23). Affordable labor and operator age were also challenges to cowherds. Feedlots were concerned about an uncertain future for the industry and their age. Lack of capital and desire to expand were noted by several respondents. Urban encroachment and unfriendly neighbors were not seen as major obstacles for most producers.

Table 23. The biggest obstacles to expanding beef cow herd (percentage)		
	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
My age	13.0	11.9
Available/additional land	30.8	7.7
Feed supply/costs	6.0	1.2
Market access	1.8	7.9
Unfriendly neighbors	2.2	1.3
Unsure of beef industry's future	7.6	15.1
Lack of affordable labor	10.5	8.3
Lack of capital	8.3	7.4
Desire to expand	8.7	9.0
Urban encroachment	2.7	1.7
Environmental regulations	5.4	25.1
Other (specify)	2.9	3.3

Over 50% of both groups use computerized programs for farm and/or financial accounting (Table 24), and approximately half of the feedlots used computers for closeouts. Several used computerized records for crop data and cow herd management.

Table 24. Percentage of respondents that use computerized records for each of the following		
	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Farm/financial accounting	53.3	64.4
Crops yield/accounting records	20.7	29.1
Cow Herd performance records	25.7	9.8
Pasture/hay yield/accounting records	8.0	2.1
Feedlot accounting/performance records	8.0	48.2
Other (specify)	2.1	0.6

In spite of growing doubt about where the next generation of large animal veterinarians will come from, respondents were confident in their current service. Both cow calf and feedlot respondents believe that the availability of qualified veterinarians in their area is excellent (Table 25). Nutritionists, engineers, and feedlots managers were less available.

Table 25. Respondents rated the availability of qualified professionals in their local area: (1 = poor; 3 = average; 5 = excellent) (average score)

	Cow-Calf	Feedlot
Veterinarians	4.38	4.37
Nutritionists	3.39	3.94
Environmental engineers	2.47	2.89
Feedlot Assistant managers	2.41	2.70

Seventy-five percent of cowherd respondents stated that non-cattle production competition has affected their ability to rent and/or buy additional hay or pasture grazing land. CRP and conversion to row crops were the two largest competitors for respondents (Table 26). Investment and recreational landowners also were competitors for pasture and hay ground.

Table 26. Respondents identified their largest competitor for buying or renting additional grazing or hay land (percentage)

Conversion to row crop	24.1
CRP	26.5
Absentee owners	4.5
Public acquisition	1.6
Investment owners	19.2
Acreage owners	3.7
Recreational land owners/leases	15.1
Other (specify)	6.1

Over 80% of cowherd respondents support a national animal identification system (Table 27). Of those opposed the reasoning often regarded cost of the system, a lack of information, or disliked how it was organized.

Table 27. Cowherd respondents stated if they supported or opposed the national animal ID system (percentage)

Support	83.2
Oppose	16.8

In the last 5 years, 50% of the feedlot respondents stated that the number of fed cattle marketed increased and 37% stated that the number didn't change. The respondents stated that the factors that resulted in the increase were the profitability of feeding cattle and that feeding cattle has been a profitable way to market corn. Those whose numbers decreased stated that the reason for the decrease is low profitability (Table 28). Thus there is a difference in efficiencies across respondents.

Table 28. The number of fed cattle marketed changed in the last 5 years (percentage)	
Increased	49.7
Decreased	13.7
Did not change	36.6
Column A	
The factors that resulted in the INCREASE (percentage)	
Expanded feeding facilities	65.2
More custom feeding	36.1
Profitability of feeding cattle	72.3
Feeding cattle has been a profitable way to market corn	71.0
New marketing opportunities or programs	9.7
Other (specify)	15.5
Column B	
The factors that resulted in the DECREASE (percentage)	
Deteriorating facilities	16.3
Low profitability	60.5
Difficulty in obtaining finances	23.3
Age or health reasons	32.6
Switch to other farm enterprises	18.6
Environmental regulations	39.5
Other (specify)	25.6

Custom Feeding

Only 22% of the feedlot respondents custom feed cattle in their feedlots for other owners. However, the largest percentage of cattle in their feedlot belongs to their operation. Customers were most often other cattle feeders with about an equal mix of grain farmers, cowherds, and non-farmers. Seventy-six percent of those custom feeding, custom feed for people living within 50 miles of the feedlot (Table 29). Relatively few cattle were owned by out of state customers.

Table 29. Percentage of respondents that custom feed cattle in their feedlot for other owners	
Yes	22.6
No	77.4
Those that custom feed cattle: The percentage of cattle in their feedlot typically belong to:	
you and/or your operation	45.3
cow/calf or stocker operators	8.0
grain farmers who do not raise cattle	7.1
to non-farmers	10.0
other cattle feeders	29.4
Percent of the cattle in the feedlot typically belong to people:	
living within 50 miles of this feedlot and in Iowa (include the cattle you own)	76.2
living more than 50 miles from this feedlot but in Iowa	9.2

Feeder Cattle Procurement

Almost fourteen percent of respondents feed cattle in states outside of Iowa. The main reason they feed cattle in other states is because of the services offered and feedlot management. It is unclear whether the lesser importance of cost of gain and fed cattle price mean that they are less important than services and management, or if Iowa is well positioned on these two items compared to other states (Table 30).

Table 30. Percentage of operators that feed cattle in other states	
Yes	13.9
No	86.1
Reason why do they feed cattle in other states (percentage)	
Cost of gain	19.4
Fed cattle price	17.3
Feedlot management	21.4
Services offered	26.5
Other (specify)	15.3

When purchasing cattle for their feedlot, respondents stated that price was the most important factor and specific sire or/and genetic level information was least important. Typical preconditioning practices (vaccination, weaned and started on feed, castrated and dehorned) were relatively important. Information on breed, previous owner, and vet signature were less important (Table 31).

Table 31. Operators ranked the importance of the following traits for the cattle they buy for their feedlot. (1 is most important, 6 is least important)	
Price	2.81
Vaccination history	3.89
Weaned and started on feed	4.36
Reputation of seller	4.50
Castrated and dehorned	4.73
Breed background information	6.37
Preconditioned without certificate	6.56
Documentation of previous owner	6.75
Veterinarian's signature confirming routines	6.87
Specific sire/genetic level information	7.26

Iowa is the origin of 32% of the feeder cattle respondents marketing in 2004 followed by the Northern Plains, South Dakota, Southeast, and Missouri. The quality of the cattle is the main reason that cattle is chosen from these regions, the vaccination program was the least selected

reason. Over 60% of the feeder cattle marketed in 2004 were purchased through an order buyer (Table 32 and 33).

Table 32. The origin of the feeder cattle that marketed in 2004 (percentage)	
Iowa	32.5
Missouri	10.9
Nebraska	5.3
South Dakota	11.8
Minnesota	2.0
Wisconsin	1.4
Illinois	1.1
Northern Plains (North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado)	18.9
Southeast (Kentucky, Tenn., Virginia, N. Carolina, Georgia)	11.1
Southwest (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico)	2.6
Other	2.3

Table 33. The most important reasons the respondents choose cattle from these states/regions (percentage)	
Price of cattle	18.7
Quality of cattle	25.7
Health of cattle	18.3
Past experience	20.9
Consistency of cattle	8.7
Vaccination program	3.5
Other (please specify)	4.2
How the respondents bought feeder cattle marketed in 2004 (percentage)	
Bought myself at auction	20.0
Bought myself direct	10.7
Worked through order buyer	62.2
Satellite auction	5.2
Other	1.8