



IN THE CATTLE MARKETS



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Research and Extension

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Consumer Demand Matters

While the dynamics of 2025 are very unlikely to play out the same here in 2026, on balance, the year has started with positive support of cattle prices across weight classes. In both winter and producer educational events, on a host of online platforms, and as a market factor, I have unapologetically “beat the drum” on the essential role of supportive consumer beef demand. In short, the market simply would not have experienced observed beef and cattle price outcomes in either 2024 or 2025, absent notable consumer demand strength. Stated simply, the number of beef cows matters but is FAR from the complete story and robs the industry of credit for a good story worth telling (and better appreciation).

There is a positive, supply-side efficiency story of getting more saleable beef per cow in the industry. This reflects a host of productivity gains spanning the industry that I will not belabor here. Rather, here I will again emphasize beef demand's role. Brian Coffey led a timely assessment posted to KSU's AgManager.info website in mid-December (<https://www.agmanager.info/livestock-meat/meat-demand/meat-demand-research-studies/microeconomic-assessment-us-retail-beef>). I continue to encourage readers to review accordingly. Today, the latest Meat Demand Monitor (MDM) project (beef & pork checkoff supported) output was released (<https://www.agmanager.info/livestock-meat/meat-demand/monthly-meat-demand-monitor-survey-data/meat-demand-monitor-february-0>). This is a fresh MDM summary report highlighting nearly 6-years of insights from over 190,000 resident survey respondents. While a wealth of detailed insights is included, meat protein is clearly having a favorable moment, and drivers of purchasing decisions continue to evolve, warranting ongoing tracking.

Alas, consumer beef demand not only matters but is evolving. As we eagerly approach spring with a hopeful eye towards sunshine, rain showers, and green grass, I truly hope readers of this pause, reflect, and better appreciate the true source of economic viability for the beef-cattle industry. **Indeed, greener pastures economically stem from positive consumer valuation of beef.**

The Markets

		Week of 2/13/26	Week of 2/6/26	Week of 2/14/25
5-Area Fed Steer	all grades, live weight, \$/cwt	\$245.62	\$241.31	\$202.91
	all grades, dressed weight, \$/cwt	\$381.13	\$378.00	\$320.52
Boxed Beef	Choice Value, 600-900 lb., \$/cwt	\$366.11	\$368.70	\$319.46
	Choice-Select Spread, \$/cwt	\$2.65	\$4.88	\$9.01
700-800 lb. Feeder Steer	Montana 3-market, \$/cwt	\$391.51	\$389.38	\$285.85
	Nebraska 7-market, \$/cwt	\$403.75	\$401.76	\$293.36
	Oklahoma 8-market, \$/cwt	\$385.59	\$381.41	\$274.49
500-600 lb. Feeder Steer	Montana 3-market, \$/cwt	\$507.31	\$505.19	\$356.70
	Nebraska 7-market, \$/cwt	\$512.19	\$508.91	\$356.10
	Oklahoma 8-market, \$/cwt	\$502.09	\$481.90	\$339.01
Feed Grains	Corn, Omaha, NE, \$/bu (Thursday)	\$4.19	\$4.24	\$4.78
	DDGS, Nebraska, \$/ton	\$164.57	\$164.21	\$166.43

Data Source: USDA-AMS Market News as compiled by LMIC

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