

Feeder Calf Preconditioning
and Backgrounding
GUIDE

Good practices,
GOOD RESULTS



2nd edition



To increase
YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS

- The aim of this guide is to meet the demand of preconditioned or backgrounded calf buyers. It proposes a methodology to assist in producing these types of calves.
- To increase your chances of success in preconditioning and backgrounding, you have to surround yourself with cattle production advisers who you trust such as, among others, a feed adviser and a veterinarian.
- Preconditioning, just like backgrounding, is an art that must be mastered to obtain a direct or indirect benefit.
- These practices can improve the profitability of your business. However, if the product offered does not meet buyers' expectations or does not comply with the desired quality, it can also increase your costs with no or little return on investment.

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INTRODUCTION

For whom is this guide intended

This guide is designed for producers who wish to precondition or background their calves to be able to sell weaned calves at a minimum weight of 295 kilograms (kg) (650 pounds (lb)).

It is also intended for all farming operators who want to integrate the various steps of herd management and who are willing to perform the additional work required to obtain a better quality product.

Definition of a preconditioned calf

- Feeder calf
- Male or female
- Vaccinated
- Castrated
- Dehorned
- Dewormed
- Weaned for a minimum of 30 days

The ideal market weight should be at least 295 kg (650 lb).

Definition of a backgrounded calf

- Feeder calf
- Male or female
- Vaccinated
- Castrated
- Dehorned
- Dewormed
- Weaned for a minimum of 45 days
- Market weight ranging from 320 to 385 kg (700 to 850 lb)

The proposed backgrounding is intensive. The backgrounded calves are fed growth rations and the gain objective is 1.36 kg (3 lb) per day. For a cow-calf producer, it is a continuation of preconditioning.

Once the calves are preconditioned, a producer who decides to go ahead with backgrounding must have a good understanding of the various risks associated with this production phase.

Before modifying your operation's direction, two very important elements must be assessed:

1. **Your business**
 - Financial management
 - Feeding
 - Herd management
 - Facilities
2. **Your animals**
 - Performance potential

Assessment of your business

Preconditioning or backgrounding may increase the quality of the product to be sold and increase the cost effectiveness of the work and assets of your operation. However, to increase your chances of success, your operation must meet the following criteria:

- The financial situation of your operation is favourable;
- Forages are in sufficient quantity and quality and easily accessible;
- The average daily weight gain of the calves is known;
- The information gathered provides for the calculation of the cost of the animals' weight gain and food conversion (number of kilos consumed for one kilogram of gain);
- To maximize income when selling, a marketing strategy has been developed;
- The herd is followed by an animal feed adviser and a veterinarian;
- Basic feed analyses are performed annually to establish feeding programs;
- Building ventilation is optimal to provide good air quality to the animals;
- The resting area has a minimum area of 2.8 m² (30 ft.²) per animal;
- The current buildings only require minor changes to be able to keep the animals longer;
- Spaces can be designed for creep feeding;
- The physical facilities allow for adequate and safe handling of the animal

If you do not answer affirmatively to the criteria described above, but you are willing to take the necessary measure to rectify the current problems, you can go forward with the preconditioning or backgrounding of your animals.

Assessment of your animals

We are assuming that the preconditioning or backgrounding is done with the calves born in your operation.

Before determining if your operation is suitable to preconditioning or backgrounding, assess the actual weight of your animals compared to the targeted weight of an average gain of 0.9 kg (2 lb) per day. It is the minimum average daily weight gain that all feeder calf producers must aim for.

The following calculation can be made for the calves born in your operation:

$$\text{Targeted weight (kg)} = 40 \text{ kg} + (0.9 \text{ kg/day} \times \text{number of days})$$

Where the number of days = current date – birth date

$$\text{For example: } 40 \text{ kg} + (0.9 \text{ kg/day} \times 214 \text{ days}) = 235 \text{ kg}$$

According to this, a calf born on April 1st must weigh on November 1st, at the age of 214 days, approximately 235 kg. If on November 1st, the calf weighs more than 235 kg, the targeted weight has been reached. Otherwise, it is necessary to identify and assess what can be improved in the herd management or if it is genetic or if it was a single event (ex.: disease, heifer calves, etc.).

The following guidelines must be considered:

- If more than 85% of the calves have reached the targeted weight, preconditioning or backgrounding can be considered;
- If less than 85% of the calves have reached the targeted weight, preconditioning or backgrounding cannot be considered before without going through the assessment and correction of the elements of your operation preventing the calves from reaching these gain rates. To assist you in your assessment, consult the stakeholders (agronomist, technical adviser, veterinarian, etc.) who will advise you on the corrective measures to take.

Step by step toward **GOOD PRECONDITIONING**

For good preconditioning, you have to count on a minimum of 30 days, without taking into account creep feeding that is introduced 15 days before weaning. However, the duration can be increased according to your marketing, product and targeted weight objectives. To create a favourable environment for preconditioning and backgrounding, you need an area with good air volume, good ventilation and that is draft-free.

Birth of the calf

Castration can be performed at the age of 1 or 2 days (as long as you can feel both testicles in the scrotum and the calf is vigorous). If not, it should be done by the age of 2 months at the latest. Dehorning should be performed at the age of 2 months. The use of polled bulls simplifies work for the producer.

Castration and dehorning

For castration at a young age, the elastic band technique is the simplest. The elastic band must be placed above the two testicles. Once the elastic is installed, ensure that both testicles are below the elastic band. If there is only one testicle, cut the elastic band and start over.

When possible, take advantage of castration to dehorn the calves. Three methods are available:

- Stick with caustic paste or dehorning paste;
- Butane or electric iron;
- Tube.

The irons must be very hot to decrease the duration of handling and at the same time animal discomfort.

In the weeks following dehorning, ensure that there is no development of horn buds. If horn buds are appearing, dehorning must be repeated.

For calves that are not castrated or dehorned, consult your veterinarian to discuss the most appropriate and humane methods. Ensure that dehorning is performed close enough to the head to prevent horns from growing again. Ensure that the time period before marketing is sufficient for good scarring.



BIRTH OF THE CALF

- Castration (1 or 2 days old)
- Dehorning (2 months old)

-15 DAYS

- Creep feeding
- Vaccination
- Deworming
- Implants
- Calves are put back with their mothers

DAY 0

- Weaning (observation of the animals)
- Introduction of starter rations

DAY 30

- Preconditioned calves
- Sale or introduction of growth rations

DAY 45 AND AFTER

- Backgrounded calves when the calves reach a minimum weight of 320 kg (700 lb)

15 days before weaning (-15 days)

The following must be performed at least 15 days before calf weaning:

1. Introduce creep feed with a coccidiostatic, when possible, and give access to water if this is not already done. This period is important as it allows the calves to adapt to new food in a place set aside for them while being in contact with their mother. To prevent cows from having access, use a small gate and/or an electric fence.
2. Vaccinate the calves (see details in the section Your Practices, Healthy Calves / Vaccination). If you use a killed vaccine, the first dose must be given 30 days before weaning and the booster shot must be given 15 days before weaning.
3. Deworm the calves (see details in the section Your Practices, Healthy Calves / Deworming).

If you decide to use an implant and you expect to market the calves in more than 60 days, it is the ideal time to go ahead with this.

After having taken these steps, it is recommended that the calves return with their mothers for 15 days. This way, the weaning stress and the risks of complications will be reduced.

Creep feeding must be started at least 15 days (ideally 30 days) before weaning. To do so, set aside a corner for food, minerals and vitamins that is accessible only to calves. In the feed corner, there should be good quality forage (protein percentage of 14 to 16% and acid detergent fiber (ADF) below 36%) and concentrates fed at will. The expected consumption of concentrates is 1 to 1.5% of the live weight of the calves per day during this period. The forage conservation quality must be excellent. Minerals and vitamins must be given according to the recommended standards.

To properly assess the needs, the animals must be weighed (weighing a few animals might be enough if the sample is representative).

Water

Clean and potable water in sufficient quantity is an essential nutrient to obtain good results (expect between 15 and 25 liters of water per day, according to the weight of the calves and the ambient temperature).

Easily accessible quality water, even in winter, will stimulate the consumption of dry matter and will help obtain the targeted average daily gain. An annual water analysis is recommended.



Tips and Tricks

- Always ensure that the watering point is noticed by the animals (ex.: continuous jet stream);
- Waterers must allow the calves to have visual contact with the water (ex.: remove the balls from the waterers and do not use waterers that calves must activate to get water);
- Weather permitting (5°C and more), use a tub like those used in pastures;
- If you have mineral blocks, putting them near the watering points will encourage water intake;
- It is important for the farm operator to always remain calm with the calves;
- Never force the calves to go to the feeder, this could have a negative impact on their food intake.

Weaning day (Day 0)

Separate the calves from their mothers and check the calves 2 or 3 times a day to detect quickly a calf that needs special medical care (isolated calf whose ears are drooping, etc.). During the first few days, it is very important to pay particular attention to ensure that each calf eats and drinks. For the health and weight gain of the calves, these two behaviours must be developed rapidly.

Do not neglect the calves' comfort. They must always be dry and sheltered from the wind. The use of quality bedding will help to keep the calves dry and clean. Expect to use approximately 2 kg (4.5 lb) of bedding per calf per day.

Here are four additional ways of reducing stress when weaning calves:

1. Use a noseband 7 days before weaning (see picture at the top of next page).
2. Allow the calf to have visual contact with its mother during weaning.
3. Keep the calves in the same environment as before.
4. Place feed and water so that they are easily noticed by the calves if their environment has changed.

During weaning, the producer will have to adjust the rations with the assistance of a trusted adviser to meet the minimum average gains of 1.13 kg (2.5 lb) per day. At weaning time, you should begin the introduction of starter rations.

The basic principles to follow for the starter rations during the first days after weaning are:

1. Quality forage fed at will (percentage of proteins of 14 to 16% and acid detergent fiber (ADF) below 36%).
2. Adaptation to grain and fermented feed.
3. Total voluntary ingestion of dry matter ideal around 2.5% of the live weight.
4. 14 to 16% protein percentage for the rations.
5. Minerals and vitamins according to the recommended standards.

The starter rations should be the same as those fed during the creep feed period.

During weaning, do not forget that the calves must eat and drink quickly on a regular basis.

During the next 30 days, the quantity of the forage consumed should decrease and that of concentrates should increase. If everything goes well, in other words, if all the calves reach the targeted level of consumption of concentrates (1 to 1.5% of the live weight), drink regularly and are not sick, growth rations can be introduced around the 20th day of weaning.

Consult your animal feed adviser before modifying the duration of the starter rations.

30 days after weaning (Day 30)

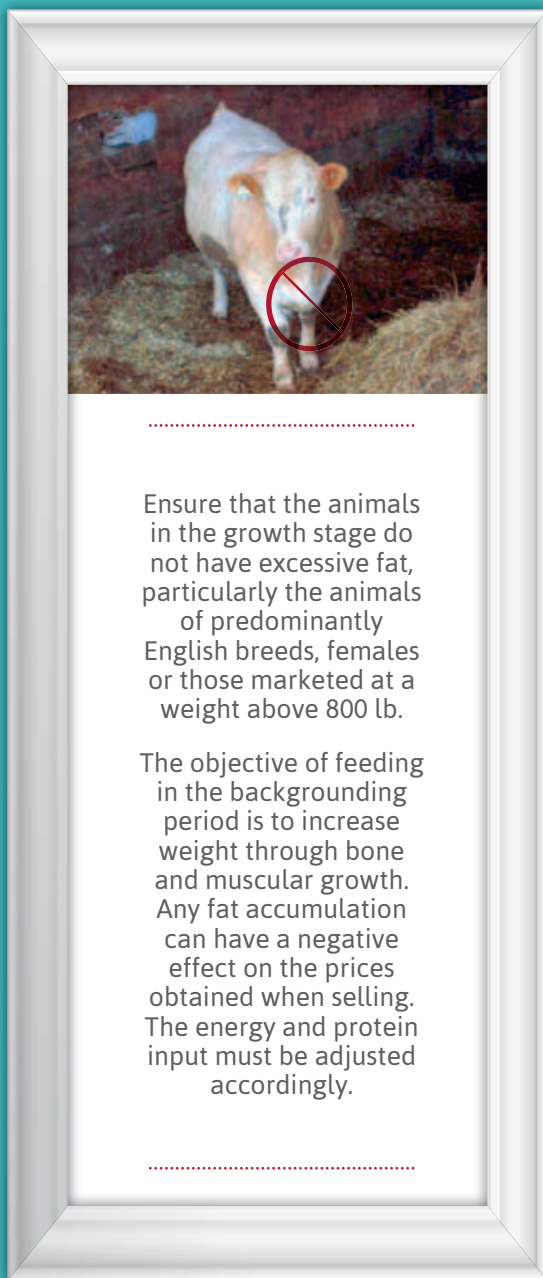
If you decide to do backgrounding, it is at this time that growth rations must be introduced.

Producers who intend on doing preconditioning or backgrounding should work with an animal feed adviser.

Basic feed analyses are essential for the formulation of the rations.

It is important to know the food value of the basic ration to balance it with energy and protein concentrates.

The ration must be balanced in minerals and vitamins to meet the nutritional needs of the calves.



Targeted average daily gain

By following each of the steps of the preconditioning or backgrounding protocol, the gain objective is:

- 2.2 to 2.7 lb/day during preconditioning (this means a gain of approximately 75 lb (34 kg) for the first 30 days)*
- 2.5 to 3.5 lb/day during the growth/backgrounding period*

*Results can vary according to the breed or the decision to install implants or not.

Ensure that the animals in the growth stage do not have excessive fat, particularly the animals of predominantly English breeds, females or those marketed at a weight above 800 lb.

The objective of feeding in the backgrounding period is to increase weight through bone and muscular growth. Any fat accumulation can have a negative effect on the prices obtained when selling. The energy and protein input must be adjusted accordingly.

Examples OF RATIONS

The following examples of growth rations were designed from feed currently available at the farm or sold in regions. These rations are presented for information purposes and it is important to note that the surrounding conditions can influence the weight gain.

Assumptions used to determine the rations:

- The calves are used to growth rations;
- The calves are in feedlots, sheltered from the wind and at an ambient temperature of -5 degrees Celsius;
- The calves have received an implant and the feed contains an ionophore;
- Average weight of the calves: 700 lb (600 to 800 lb);
- Growth duration: 80 days;
- Rations aimed at an average daily weight gain of 2.5 lb/day;
- Voluntary ingestion of dry matter: 2.5% of the live weight, that is 8 kg/day or 17.64 lb/day;
- Calcium/phosphorus ratio = 2/1;
- Feed ration level of crude protein: 14 to 16 %.

Ration n° 1

Ingredients	Qty/head/day (kg)		Qty/80 days As fed (kg)	Price/kg (\$)	Cost (\$)
	As fed	D.M.			
Dry hay 13% CP 40% ADF	3.9		312	0.12	37.44
Grain corn n° 2	3.9		312	0.20	62.40
Soya 48%	0.75		60	0.55	33.00
Mix of minerals and vitamins	0.1		8	0.795	6.36
Total	-	7.557	-	-	139.20

Ration n° 2

Ingredients	Qty/head/day (kg)		Qty/80 days As fed(kg)	Price/kg (\$)	Cost (\$)
	As fed	D.M.			
Dry hay 15% CP 33% ADF	3.9		312	0.14	43.68
Oats	4.55		364	0.20	72.80
Soya 48%	0.25		20	0.55	11.00
Mix of minerals and vitamins	0.1		8	0.795	6.36
Total	-	7.553	-	-	133.84

“Losses in feeders” have to be minimized as animal feed represents an important part of the weight gain costs. By taking into account the losses in feeders, the quantities of dry matter to be fed could reach 2.7% of the live weight.

Ration n° 3

Ingredients	Qty/head/day (kg)		Qty/80 days As Fed (kg)	Price/kg (\$)	Cost (\$)
	As fed	D.M.			
Dry hay 15% CP 33% ADF	3.2		256	0.14	35.84
Corn silage 35%	8		640	0.05	32.00
Grain corn n° 2	1.5		120	0.20	24.00
Soya 48%	0.75		60	0.55	33.00
Mix of minerals and vitamins	0.10		8	0.795	6.36
Total	-	7.587	-	-	131.20

Ration n° 4

Ingredients	Qty/head/day (kg)		Qty/80 days As fed (kg)	Price/kg (\$)	Cost (\$)
	As fed	D.M.			
Dry hay 13% CP 40% ADF	2.25		180	0.12	21.60
Corn silage 35%	8		640	0.05	32.00
Rolled barley	2.3		184	0.20	36.80
Soya 48%	0.80		64	0.55	35.20
Mix of minerals and vitamins	0.1		8	0.795	6.36
Total	-	7.551	-	-	131.96

The quantities fed include losses associated with storage and handling to establish a food conversion index of less than 7 kg of feed per kg of gain on a dry matter basis. The mixes of minerals fed at a rate of 100 to 150 grams per day contain a food additive (ionophore) given according to the daily recommendations of 22 to 33 parts per million (ppm).

If you are not using a total mixed ration (TMR), talk to your adviser before adding an ionophore to prevent serious toxicity problems.

Your Practices, HEALTHY CALVES

All producers who intend on doing preconditioning or backgrounding must consult and work in close collaboration with a veterinary practitioner.

Vaccination

Annual vaccination of the breeding herd is strongly recommended.

- It prevents breathing problems.
- It prevents a certain number of abortions.
- It decreases significantly the incidence of immunotolerant calves.

Vaccination should at a minimum be done against BRSV¹, BVD², IBR³ and PI₃⁴ according to one of the two following programs:

1. Live attenuated vaccine: administered 15 days before weaning.
2. Killed vaccine: administered at the latest 30 days before weaning for the first dose and 15 days before weaning for the booster shot.

Notify your veterinarian of the imminent weaning of your calves, so that:

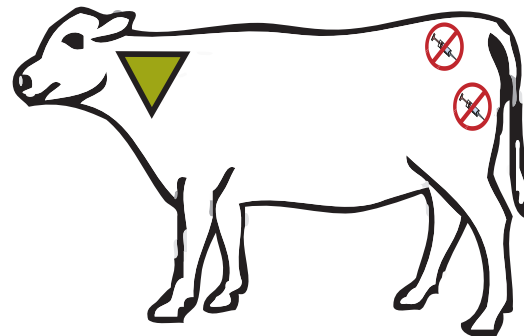
- He can validate your vaccination procedure
- He can discuss with you the minimal protections to offer (ex.: Histophilus somni or Clostridium spp.)
- He can plan with you a rational action plan with regard to the symptoms of complex respiratory diseases

Conservation of vaccinations and medications:

Vaccinations and medications must be kept in a refrigerator at approximately 5 degrees Celsius to ensure optimal effectiveness. Carefully read the labels and follow your veterinarian's recommendations.

During vaccination, the calves' stress must be minimal because the effect of the vaccination can be significantly reduced if the calves are stressed.

Injection site



Deworming

After a season in a pasture, calves are parasitized at various degrees. They have to be dewormed. A reasonable choice of dewormer seems to be avermectins because of:

- Their broad spectrum
- Their facility to use (poured solution)
- Their reasonable cost

Certain situations could however justify the use of dewormers other than the avermectins.

Implants

For those who decide to install implants in their calves, the following products can be used: Ralgro, Synovex S or H¹, Component E.S. or E.H.¹, Revalor G, Compudose or their equivalent. Implants can be installed at vaccination time. For better results for your operation and that of the feedlot finishers, ensure that the implant cycle is adhered to.

Implants can increase the average daily gain by 7 to 13% in a very economical way during that period. Improper use of the implants or inadequate feeding can decrease significantly the expected effect of the implants.

Weak or sick calves

As soon as unusual behaviours (isolated animal, refusal to eat, droopy ears, etc.) appear, it is important to take the temperature with a thermometer before doing any other intervention. Only calves with a fever (temperature above 39.5 – 40°C) can justifiably receive a curative dose of antibiotics. Antibiotics with long-lasting effect are often prescribed by your veterinarian because they require less handling.

When beginning preconditioning or backgrounding of a calf lot, use “Health Records” to note the treatments administered to the animals. These records must contain the following information:

- ATQ identifier number
- Treatment date
- Weight of the animal
- Temperature of the animal
- Product used
- Quantity administered
- Reason of treatment
- Product withdrawal period

Gestating females

Gestating females are a problem that could undermine the efforts put into the preconditioning or backgrounding of your animals at marketing time. To prevent this situation, you must:

- Remove the bull as soon as the breeding period is over or as soon as the females reach the age of 6 months;
- Perform gestation tests;
- Perform an abortion by giving the medication recommended by the veterinarian.



¹ H and E.H. for females

FEEDING Practices

Forage can be placed in a different place than the concentrates. It is then very important that all calves have access to the concentrates at the same time. To do this, a space of two linear feet per head is required when designing the feeder.

If the ration fed is a TMR, the space per head can be less.

It is important to feed the animals according to a regular schedule.



Winning FACILITIES

Calves must never be placed in a building that is not well lit or well ventilated. This type of building facilitates the spread of diseases, which you want to avoid at all costs.

When assessing the facilities, there are three essential elements:

- Cleanliness
- Space
- Ventilation

In general, the resting area should be at least 30 feet square per animal (approximately 2.8 meters square).

If the animals are kept in an outside pen, a wind-break, shelters for the calves and a feeding area should be installed. At all times, the facility must adhere to the environmental standards.

The use of a cold barn is also appropriate. It is a barn that ideally has no more than 2 degrees Celsius difference with the outside temperature to avoid condensation.

The following chart shows an example of density according to the animals' weight.

Minimum size of pens recommended for calves of 400 to 700 lb

Solid floors	30-35 ft ²	2.8-3.25 m ²
Solid floors with outside pen	According to the regulation in effect	

With regard to equipment, it is necessary to have a corral and a scale. This will allow you to perform handling and follow-ups of the animals adequately.

Space on your land during the summer season

During the summer season, the use of productive pastures for preconditioning or backgrounding of calves allows you to maximize the use of space you have in your operation.

In the case where feed comes exclusively from pastures, the weight gain should be from 1.4 to 1.8 lb/day.



Your Costs, **YOUR PROFITS \$\$\$**

In our assessment of the overall costs, we are assuming that the additional kilograms of gain produced for each calf are obtained through an increase in the variable costs only, without the need of major investments.

The overall costs that you should take into consideration in your assessment are divided in two groups.

1. Variable costs according to the number of head:

- Feed
- Medication and veterinary care
- Deworming
- Implants (calves are kept longer than 60 days if they have implants)
- Bedding
- Short-term interest costs

2. Yardage costs. These costs vary little according to the number of calves kept in backgrounding. Here are the main elements that make up those costs:

- Energy costs (fuel and electricity)
- Building, machinery and truck maintenance costs
- Manpower costs

In the 4 examples of rations shown on pages 10 and 11, the cost of the rations was determined with the prices in effect in the fall of 2013 and is subject to variations according to the year, season and location.

The feed cost varies from \$1.64 to \$1.74/day for an average cost of \$1.69/day for an average daily gain of 2.5 lb or \$0.68/lb or \$1.49/kg of gain.

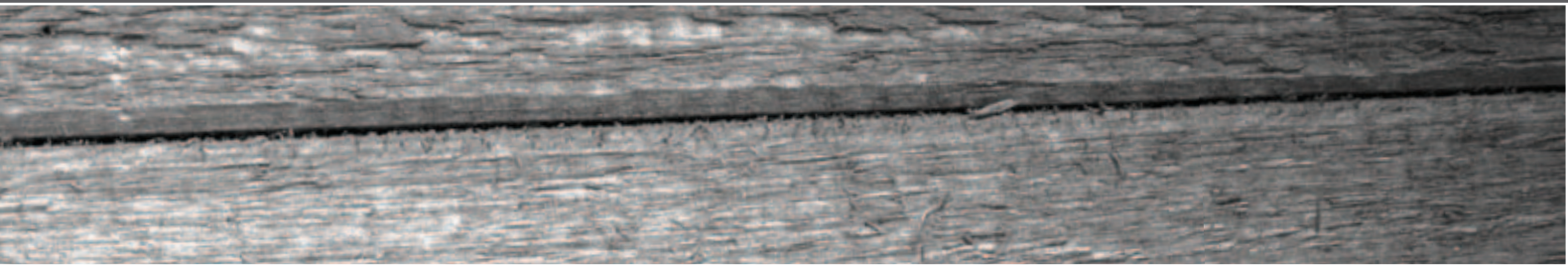
Medication, veterinary care, dewormers and implants cost \$0.12/kg of gain. Bedding in sufficient quality (\pm 2kg/calf/day) costs \$0.16/kg of gain.

Short-term interest costs represent \$0.15/day, or approximately \$0.06/lb or \$0.13/kg of gain. The interest rate considered is 4.5%.

Yardage costs, that is energy cost, building and machinery maintenance costs and manpower costs are estimated at \$0.49/kg of gain or \$45/head for an average gain of 91 kg/head (same base as the ration examples, 80 d x 2.5 lb = 200 lb or 91 kg).

The above yardage costs take into account remuneration for the backgrounding work. Any additional net revenue would increase the remuneration of your work and the return on the capital invested. The sum of the variable costs is \$2.39/kg of gain.





These costs are for information purposes only to help you assess your cost for one kilogram of additional gain.

To this, you have to add a cost for mortality. For example, if there is a loss of one calf, this corresponds to the market value of the calf and stabilisation insurance (ASRA). The death of a 670 lb calf that would be sold at \$1.60/lb reduces the producer's revenue by \$1,424/head (\$1,072/head from the market and \$352/head from net ASRA compensation). This loss of revenue must be amortized over the overall pounds produced in preconditioning and/or backgrounding.

Let's not forget that the weight gain of a dead calf is not taken into account in the total kilograms of gain.

If there is mortality, the action plan must be revised to ensure that market calves meet a weight that will enable the operation to meet its eligibility threshold for stabilization insurance.

Net compensation (compensation less contribution) can be taken into consideration.

Feeder calf producers can also obtain insurance for beef cattle. In this case, the volume of minimum insurable gain is 1,500 lb per year. Check with La Financière agricole du Québec (FADQ) to learn about all of the terms and conditions of the ASRA Program - Feeder cattle and slaughter cattle.

Costs

	\$/kg	\$/lb
Feed	1.49	0.68
Medication, dewormer, implants and veterinary care	0.12	0.05
Bedding	0.16	0.07
Short-term interest	0.13	0.06
Yardage	0.49	0.22
Total:	2.39	1.08

Source :AGDEX feeder and backgrounding calves, CRAAQ and our calculations.
October 2010

Estimation of the net compensation paid per feeder calf versus evaluation of the market price*

ASRA Stabilized Price	Sale price (670 lb)	(\$/lb)	Compensation*	
			Gross ASRA	Net ASRA (2/3)
\$/ calf	\$/ calf		\$/ calf	
\$1,600	\$804	\$1.20	\$796	\$531
\$1,600	\$938	\$1.40	\$662	\$441
\$1,600	\$1,072	\$1.60	\$528	\$352
\$1,600	\$1,206	\$1.80	\$394	\$263
\$1,600	\$1,340	\$2.00	\$260	\$173
\$1,600	\$1,474	\$2.20	\$126	\$84
\$1,600	\$1,608	\$2.40	\$ -	\$ -

* In 2013, 75% of this amount was paid on the kg of calves sold and 25% on the basis of the number of cows in inventory.

Reminder

Before beginning the preconditioning or backgrounding of your animals, it is very important to assess the actual costs for your operation to produce one kilogram of additional gain.

Feeding is the most important variable cost in backgrounding. It represents approximately 60% of the cost of one kilogram of gain. The feed rations used must meet the calves' needs and allow for weight gains at reasonable costs. The anticipated additional revenues must at a minimum cover the additional costs.

Selling a Different **CALF DIFFERENTLY**

Preconditioned calves

Preconditioning must be considered as a new way of marketing your product. To obtain the best remuneration possible from the market, the calves must possess the following characteristics:

- Good bones
- Good feet and legs
- Developed muscles, mainly the back, rump and shoulders
- A good ingestion and breathing capacity (size of the body)

To market these calves, there are three options available according to the volume you can offer and the uniformity of the animals:

1. Specialized auctions
2. Supervised sales
3. Direct sales

To market a volume of 50 calves or less with weight differences above 150 lb, we recommend using the services of specialized auctions. At the time of sale, there is no indication for the buyers that the calves were preconditioned. Their judgment will therefore be based on the apparent quality of the animals.

For a volume of more than 50 calves with weight differences of 150 lb or less, supervised sales or direct sales can be considered. In the case of supervised sales, the auction acts as a middleman between the seller and the buyer to determine the selling price. To do so, it bases itself on market price reference and the quality of the animals and other terms and conditions of the transaction, such as:

- Shrinkage
- Transportation cost
- Weighing of the truck empty and full
- Distance between weigh stations
- Marketing cost

With direct sales, the seller negotiates directly with the buyer and must take into account all of these factors. The feeder calf sales agency can inform the producers about the elements that can come up during the negotiation of a sale.

If the recovery of the value of preconditioning of the calves is not guaranteed during a sale, we recommend backgrounding the calves because the costs and the risks associated with weaning will be amortized over a large number of kilograms of gain. Backgrounding is the continuation of preconditioning (minimum of 45 days instead of 30 days).

Backgrounded calves

To determine the duration of backgrounding, one has to be aware of the signals from the market. The marketing of backgrounded calves should be based on the same principles as those of preconditioned calves.

The feeder calf sales agency or the various supervised networks can help in marketing animals. Do not hesitate to contact them.

One last thing...

We wish you good luck in the preparation and marketing of your animals.

We stress one last time the importance of working with stakeholders of the sector to increase your chances of success in the preconditioning or backgrounding of your calves.

To Increase **YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

For those who wish to increase their knowledge, the following organizations provide information on the subject matter through the internet. Here is a list of useful and practical addresses to add to your favourites!

Agri-Réseau/Bovins de boucherie • www.agrireseau.qc.ca

Canfax • www.canfax.ca/general/auctions.htm

Centre de référence en agriculture et agroalimentaire du Québec • www.craaq.qc.ca

- Cow-Calf Guide
- Beef Cattle, growth and backgrounding

Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec • www.bovin.qc.ca • 450 679-0540, poste 8891

Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec • www.fpccq.qc.ca

Farm Credit Canada • www.fcc-fac.ca • 1 888 332-3301

Grainwiz/Actualité et analyse des marchés agricoles • www.grainwiz.com

La Financière agricole du Québec • www.financiereagricole.qc.ca • 1 800 749-3646

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Agriculture/Husbandry/Beef Cattle • www.omafra.gov.on.ca

Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec • www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca • 1 888 222-6272

Ontario Cattlemen's Association • www.cattle.guelph.on.ca/markets/marketinfo.asp



555, boul. Roland-Therrien, bureau 305, Longueuil (Québec) J4H 4G2
Téléphone : 450 679-0530 • Télécopieur : 450 442-9348 • fpbq@upa.qc.ca • www.bovin.qc.ca