

LOW COST COW/CALF PROGRAM

The Bulletin For Alumni Of The School

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Commodity Based

If you continue to operate as you have been, you can expect the same results. If you are happy with those results, please continue. Dissatisfied? Then try something different. *Our area of expertise lies with the production side rather than marketing.* They can work hand in hand, however. Most Cow/Calf producers sell into the commodity market. It is an institutionalized/mature industry that the producer cannot impact. Who sets the price? Increasing production and reducing costs are the only means available to increase profits. They have become clichés: “Match the cow’s biological cycle with nature’s cycle, forget weaning wt (wean according to the cow’s BCS), be concerned with market wt, make use of stockpiled forage, grain and forage do not mix, Cow/Calf production and farming are not compatible, don’t spend money and, for the brood herd, sell when the price is high and buy or replace when the price is low.”

Knowledge Based

There are alternatives – knowledge-based markets. One knowledge-based enterprise is the production and marketing of an “All Natural Product.” This product satisfies the demand by those who are convinced that commodity beef is unhealthy. They demand and pay, a considerable premium, for a product that is produced in an environment free of growth enhancers such as antimicrobials, anabolic agents, etc. It is a rewarding enterprise. Many producers seized the opportunity and made big-time sacrifices to build the excellent infrastructures existing today across North America. There is yet another knowledge-based enterprise. It is the production and marketing of forage fed/finished beef (ruminant animal products). The product is not new. It has been around since the invention of ruminants. The natural product got pushed aside by enterprising cattlemen and dairymen who recognized the economics of grain feeding. This production scheme evolved in advance of our knowledge of human health and nutrition. As the latter fields are playing catch up, we are learning that there are considerable differences in the nutrient content of grass fed vs. grain fed. The

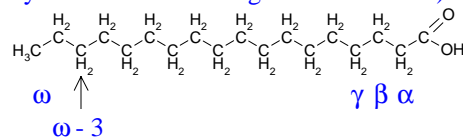
fed. The differences are nutrients (essential to the well being of humans) that lie primarily in the fatty tissues.

Knowing the Product

It won’t suffice to say that the product is free of synthesized chemicals. Merely throwing out the terms Essential Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids, Omega-3s and Omega-6s, CLA and that little squiggly thing ω won’t get it done. There must be further explanation. Via her TV appearances, speeches and books, Jo Robinson¹ has done an excellent job with a difficult subject. She does speak the consumer’s language. How about you as a producer/marketer? Know enough already? If not, we hope to augment not bore.

A Fatty Acid

Fatty acids are part of the basic structure of fats (fat to be dealt with later). The following is the chemist’s stick figure representation of a fatty acid. *Depending on your chemist, the figure may be pictured in reverse from left to right.* One essential feature of a fatty acid is the Carboxyl group—the carbon (C) farthest to the right with the =O and –OH attached. The other feature is the Hydrocarbon chain—everything to the left of the C in the Carboxyl group. (The many and varied fatty acids contained in human diets will have hydrocarbon chain lengths of 4 to 22 Cs).

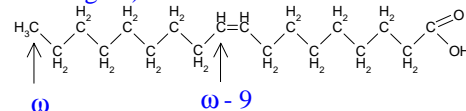


The chemist uses Greek letters to label the carbons in the hydrocarbon chain. The first is alpha (α), second beta (β), third gamma (γ) and so on from right to left in this sketch. This sequential labeling continues until the very last C. Then, regardless of chain length, this C is labeled omega (ω), the last letter (24th) in the Greek alphabet. Descriptions of the fatty acids are commonly based upon the ω C. For instance, the third C to the right of the ω C is designated omega minus 3 ($\omega-3$). The example fatty acid is a **Saturated** fatty acid. It has the maximum possible number of hydrogen (H) atoms attached to every C atom. It is saturated with hydro-

gen atoms. The fatty acid above happens to be **Stearic** (common name) acid (18 Cs, count ‘em).

Unsaturated

Another dietary fatty acid is **Oleic**. While it also consists of 18 C atoms, it comes up short a couple of H atoms. When Hs are in short supply, two C atoms must link together by what is termed a double bond (shown as an equal sign = in the following stick figure).



The double bond appears at the point of the missing Hs. In this case, one H is absent from both C 9 and C 10, counting right from the ω C. This is commonly termed the point of unsaturation. In the Omega lexicon, it is an $\omega-9$ fatty acid (denoting the first C involved in the case of the missing Hs). Since there is only one point of unsaturation, Oleic is a mono-unsaturated fatty acid.

Rumors

“Thank you for an incredible class on nutrition, etc. My head is still spinning from the possibilities.”

Thank you, Dave Duncan....Oregon

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¹ www.eatwild.com