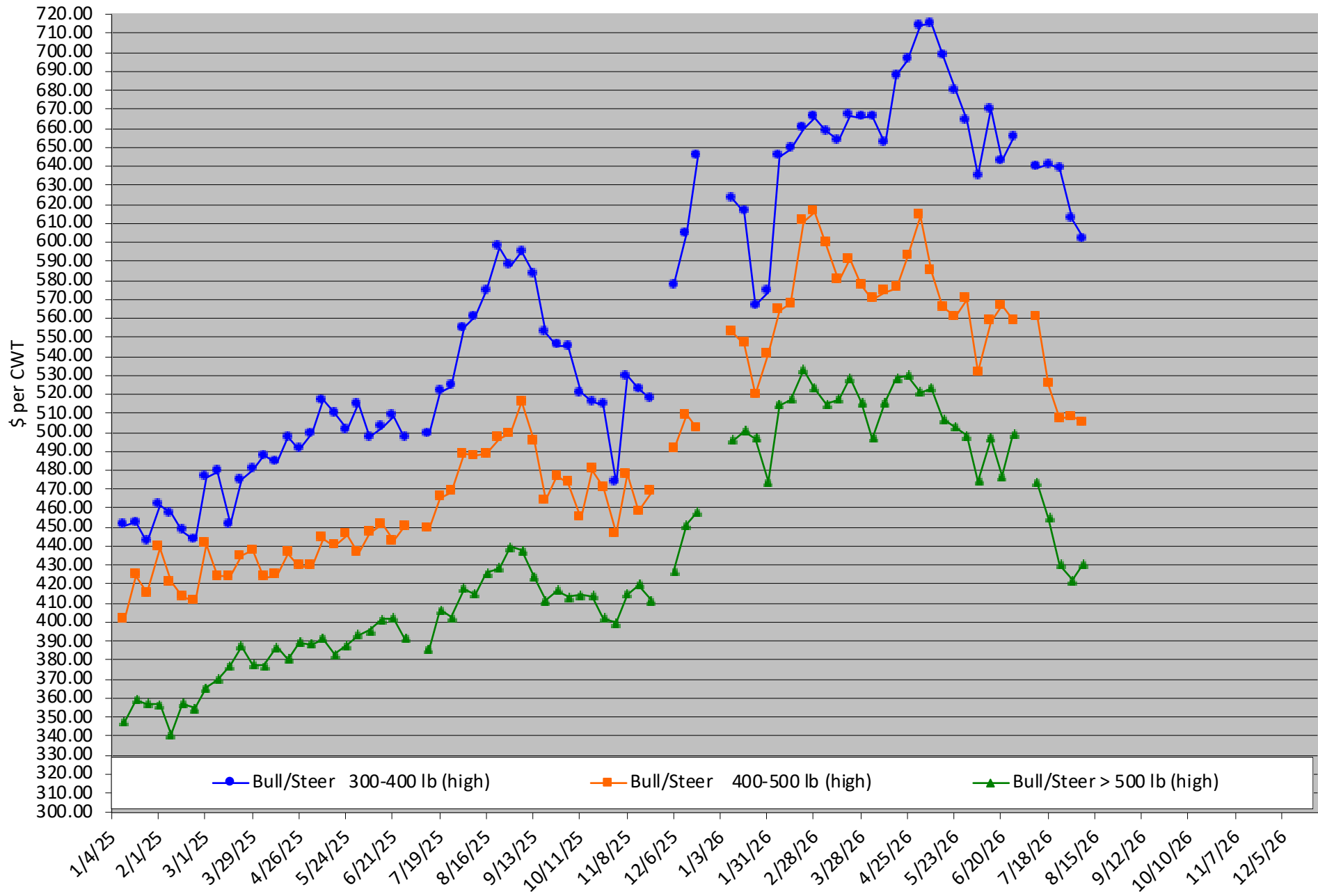


Calf Price Trends

Trend of the Highest Price Reported for Various Weight Calves, Average of 6 East & Central Texas Livestock Auctions

Chart created by Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

For a weekly email copy of this chart please email amsensing@ag.tamu.edu or contact a Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent

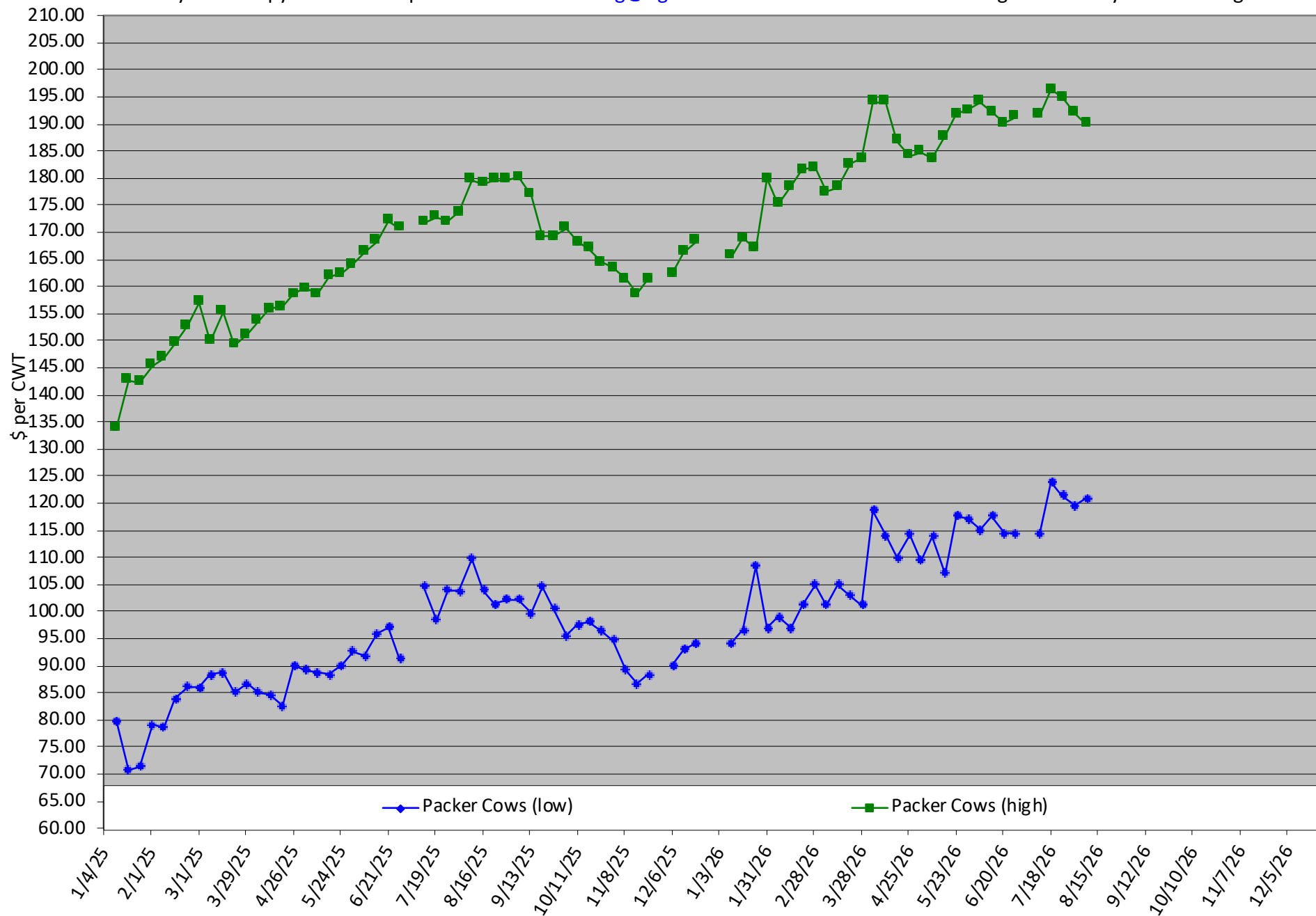


Packer Cow PriceTrends

Trend of High and Low Prices Reported for Packer Cows, Average of 6 East & Central Texas Livestock Auctions

Chart created by Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

For a weekly email copy of this chart please email amsensing@ag.tamu.edu or contact a Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent



Beef Quality Assurance Training

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

Red River Valley Fair Grounds
570 Rita Haynes Blvd. Paris, TX

www.texasbeefquality.com

Registration	10:00 AM
Program starts	10:30 AM
Lunch served	
Conclude around	3:00 PM

No Cost to Attend

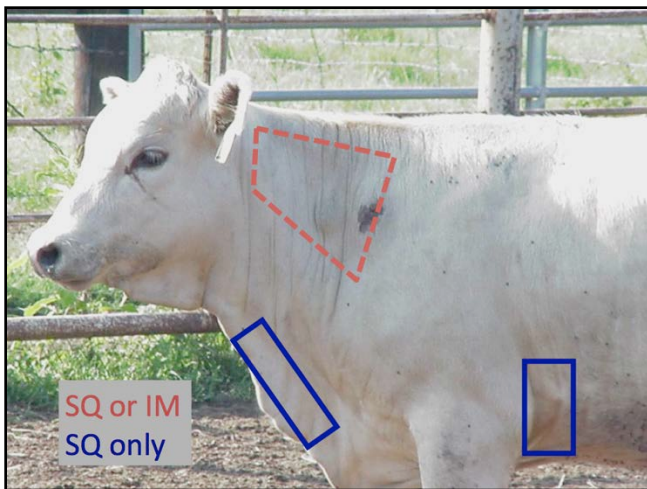
Please RSVP to:

Lamar County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension at 903-737-2443



Topics Include

- food safety
- cattle and beef quality
- environmental stewardship
- animal handling and well being
- needle and syringe selection
- proper injection technique
- vaccine handling
- residue avoidance



AG IN THE EVENING

2026 virtual Zoom Educational Series programs brought to you by the Extension offices of Houston & Gregg Counties

ALL PROGRAMS START AT 6 PM

To register, click the TITLE of each program or scan QR Code

**August 11: Dr. Vanessa Corriher-Olson
Winter Pasture Options**



**September 8: Dr. Jason Banta
Winter Feeding & Supplementation
Considerations**



**October 13: Dr. Vanessa Corriher-Olson
Brassica & Other Forbs**



***More Ag in the Evening Topics coming in
January 2027***



**Previous recordings
available by clicking photo**



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Optimizing Cow Size

Management decisions and ranch profitability can be significantly impacted

Texas A&M AgriLife photo

by Dr. Jason Banta, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

What is the optimal cow size? As with most aspects of beef cattle production, there is no perfect cow size for all operations. The optimal cow size will vary depending on the type of operation, available forage resources, geographic location, marketing goals, and other factors.

How would you define cow size? Would it be based on weight? Would it be based on hip height and frame score, or would it be based on something else? For the purpose of the discussion in this article, cow size will focus on weight and generally mature cow weight.

From a physiological perspective, mature weight can be defined as the weight of an animal at which point additional weight gain consists mostly of fat with limited additional protein gain. From a practical standpoint, mature weight is the weight of cows that are five years old or older and are in a body condition score of 5. Cows should also be open or in the first trimester of pregnancy when estimating mature weight. At 95 days of gestation, the combined weight of the uterus and fetus is generally less than about 8 lbs., so it is okay to compare open cows and cows in the first trimester of pregnancy without making any weight adjustments.

Cow size is important because it has significant impacts on forage intake, stocking rates, nutrient requirements, the number of calves produced on a given property, calf growth potential, and ranch profitability.

Forage intake will vary based on forage quality and other factors from about 1.7 to 2.4 percent of body weight on a dry matter basis. While there is some individual variation from cow to cow, intake as a percentage of body weight is very consistent across a range of cow weights. For example, if a group of 1,000-lb. cows eat 2 percent of their body weight of a given forage, it can be expected that a group of 1,200-

or 1,400-lb. cows would also consume 2 percent of their body weight of that same forage. So, in this scenario intake per day would average 20 lbs. of forage for the 1,000-lb. cows and 28 lbs. of forage for the 1,400-lb. cows.

This relationship between forage intake and body weight has major implications on stocking rates, total cow numbers on a given ranch, and ranch profitability. The total number of cows (or pairs) the forage produced on a ranch can support will vary based on cow size. Take a ranch that can support 100 cows that weigh 1,200 lbs. That same ranch could only support 85.7 cows that weighed 1,400 lbs., but it could support 120 cows that weighed 1,000 lbs.

The genetic potential for increased growth is highly correlated to mature size. As a result of intense selection for higher weaning and yearling weights, a corresponding increase in mature cow size has occurred in the beef cow population. Genetic trends from the American Angus Association help illustrate this point. Over the last 20 years, the average weaning weight EPD increased by 35 lbs. and the average yearling weight EPD increased by 61 lbs. However, the average mature weight EPD increased by 52 lbs. during this same period.

Is it better to run fewer cows that are bigger or more cows that are smaller? Actual sale data from a preconditioned calf sale in 2024 is helpful in evaluating this question. For the purposes of this example, the assumption was made that calf sale weights are 45 percent of the cow's weight. So, cows weighing 1,291 lbs. were assumed to produce calves that weighed 581 lbs. at sale. Table 1 (page 74) shows the projections for cows of five varying sizes.

continued on page 74

OPTIMIZING COW SIZE

continued from page 70

In this example, more income was generated by the smaller cows compared with the bigger cows. Although the calves from the smaller cows generally brought fewer total dollars per head, the additional number of calves sold generated more total income.

It is also worth noting that the calves that weighed 581 lbs. brought \$22 more per head than the calves that weighed 627 lbs. Additionally,

increasing calf weight from 520 to 627 lbs. only resulted in an increase in value per head of \$51. This is important when thinking about creep feeding to try and increase weaning weight, but that is a topic for another day.

Table 1 shows the impacts of estimated cow weight on number of cows of varying weights that could be supported by the same ranch and resulting impact on total income from calf sales based on data in this example.

So far, the focus has been on income generated from calf sales, but what about income from the sale of cull cows? Remember the ranch is selling

the same total weight of cull cows. The only difference is how many cows are being sold from each weight group and potential impacts on fees, commission, and price per cwt. Because of less fees and potentially a small increase in price/cwt, there would be an advantage in cull cow income for the bigger cows. However, this advantage would only be about \$5,000 to \$10,000 more for the 1,496-lb. cows compared with the 1,018-lb. cows. This advantage only occurs once when the cows are sold compared to the annual advantage in calf sales for smaller cows.

The example above assumed that calf sale weight was 45 percent of cow weight. In reality, bigger cows often wean a lower percentage of their body weight than smaller cows. When calculating weaning weight as a percentage of cow weight, it is critical to adjust cow weights to a body condition score of 5. If cow weights are not adjusted to the same body condition score, the ratio will favor thin cows compared with cows that weaned the same size calf but stayed in better condition.

Although there is a strong correlation between growth and mature size, there are outliers from a genetic standpoint that have the ability to grow faster while also maintaining or even reducing mature size. The EPDs from a current Angus AI sire provide an example of these outliers. The bull currently ranks in the top 15 percent of the breed for weaning weight, top 35 percent for yearling weight, and in the bottom 90 percent of the breed for mature weight. Bulls like this allow producers to select for above average growth while at the same time reducing mature weight relative to the breed average.

In summary, smaller cows in most situations are likely to generate more profit potential for commercial producers, but remember there is a point at which cows can get too small. The right cow size for seedstock producers will depend on their target market. If bulls are being produced to use only in terminal size situations, then larger cows that tend to have more genetic potential for growth are likely favorable. However, if bulls are being produced for commercial producers that will be retaining heifers, then it is critical to control mature weight. 🐾

Average calf weight, lbs ¹	Calf, \$/cwt ¹	Calf, \$/head	Estimated cow weight, lbs ²	Number of cows ³	Number of calves ⁴	Total income ⁵
458	\$345	\$1,580	1,018	98.3	83.5	\$131,963
520	\$329	\$1,711	1,156	86.5	73.6	\$125,843
581	\$307	\$1,784	1,291	77.5	65.8	\$117,428
627	\$281	\$1,762	1,393	71.8	61.0	\$107,483
673	\$273	\$1,834	1,496	66.9	56.8	\$104,231

¹Actual weight and price data from #1 Charolais cross steers sold in the same Texas precondition calf sale.

²Cow weight was estimated by dividing average weight of the calves within a group by 45 percent (i.e., $520 \div 0.45 = 1,156$ lbs).

³Assumes ranch in this example could support 100,000 lbs. of cow weight.

⁴Assumes 85 percent weaned calf crop.

⁵Total income = \$ per head * number of calves. Values rounded after all calculations were made.

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