

## Georgia Beef Challenge – Report for 2007-08

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The Georgia Beef Challenge was organized in 1991 to allow Georgia cattle producers to gain information on the health, performance, and carcass merit of their cattle. Over 24,000 calves from Georgia cattle operations have been evaluated since the beginning. As a result, we have gained much information about the genetics of our cattle, both from an individual herd standpoint and how Georgia cattle compare to the rest of the beef industry. Our partners at Tri County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF) in Southwest Iowa continue to do an outstanding job with our cattle.

In 2007-08, 1,442 calves were consigned to the program. Shipments started the end of April and ended in March. As usual, factors beyond our control influenced the outcome of the Beef Challenge. As you probably remember, feed and fuel prices during that period were outrageous.

Risk Management goals for the majority of calves shipped are determined by the Georgia Beef Challenge Steering Committee. The committee consisted of Eddie Bradley, Jim Collins, Ricky Conner, Mac Hall, Terry Harris, Curt Lacy, John McKissick, Bobby Miller, Clay Sims, Ronnie Silcox, and Robert Stewart, and Patsie Cannon. The pricing strategy was based on the following guidelines which were approved at the annual meeting of consignors:

- (1) Use the best tools available to insure that there will be no worse than a breakeven value of the cattle in the pen. Do not work towards a specific profit figure; just use futures, options, or LRP insurance to protect the breakeven value of the feeders. Corn purchases can be used. The Risk Management Committee (Lacy, Collins, McKissick) has the flexibility to use the best tools in each situation.
- (2) If a producer has a contract worth of cattle in a pen, then he/she can opt to do his/her own risk management.

A special thanks is due to Jim Collins, Curt Lacy and John McKissick for their outstanding work for our program. They organized the breakeven projections, watched the market, and ordered the contracts. Individual profits on our calves ranged from +472.54 to -1,067.79, which was obviously a death loss.

The following table summarized the performance, carcass data, and profitability for the 2007-08 Beef Challenge. Overall, our cattle performed competitively.

### SUMMARY OF 2007 - 2008 GEORGIA BEEF CHALLENGE

<i>Feedlot</i>	<i>No. of Calves</i>	<i>Death Loss</i>	<i>Ave. Act. Carcass Price</i>	<i>Ave. Gross Income</i>	<i>Cost of Gain \$/cwt.</i>	<i>Overall ADG</i>	<i>Hot Carcass Wt.</i>	<i>Dress %</i>	<i>Fat Cover</i>	<i>Ribeye Area</i>	<i>Calc. Yield Grade</i>
S & B April 07 S & H	52	0.000%	142.88	1,130.65	86.43	2.91	774	61.2%	0.41	13.08	2.72
S & B May 07 Heifers	51	0.000%	143.27	1,021.40	104.24	2.77	722	61.5%	0.45	13.15	2.66
S & B June 07 S & H	71	1.408%	141.45	1,000.63	64.11	3.07	700	61.5%	0.53	12.35	2.97
Gregory May 07 S & H - Nat	71	0.000%	157.25	1,056.75	94.00	2.47	669	60.5%	0.46	11.89	2.82
S & B Aug 07 Heifers	63	0.000%	153.99	1,104.16	73.53	2.78	717	61.5%	0.54	12.03	3.16
Carson Aug 07 Steers	68	0.000%	139.30	1,060.38	58.43	3.25	741	61.5%	0.52	12.13	3.18

S & B July 07 S & H	83	1.205%	143.42	962.55	69.39	2.80	673	61.5%	0.53	11.46	3.17
Nilan Aug 07 Steers	57	1.754%	138.93	1,089.70	80.73	2.85	779	61.5%	0.53	12.12	3.37
Gregory Aug 07 S & H	109	2.752%	145.57	1,010.78	76.78	2.72	698	61.5%	0.47	12.52	2.73
Gregory Sept 07 S & H	69	5.797%	143.63	997.21	75.19	2.87	717	61.5%	0.49	12.36	2.93
Carson Aug 07 Steers - Pen 2	102	3.922%	143.63	1,033.41	56.84	3.23	728	61.5%	0.57	11.87	3.34
Tri Tower Oct 07 S & H	67	1.493%	143.60	1,079.11	82.57	2.91	742	61.5%	0.50	12.46	3.10
Gregory Aug 07 S Natural	44	4.545%	153.39	1,024.96	79.58	2.97	691	60.2%	0.53	11.66	3.20
Bentley East Oct 07 S & H	81	0.000%	143.31	992.30	72.22	2.95	672	61.5%	0.62	11.24	3.48
S & B Nov 07 S & H	95	1.053%	145.02	1,044.89	83.02	2.89	711	61.5%	0.38	12.45	2.59
Tri Tower Dec 07 S & H	79	3.797%	150.21	1,019.88	86.41	3.03	688	61.5%	0.49	11.89	3.01
Rolling B Dec 07 Steers	81	9.877%	152.04	987.63	87.70	3.19	709	61.5%	0.40	12.19	2.74
Nilan Feb 08 S & H	58	1.724%	151.01	1,103.77	103.50	2.57	718	61.5%	0.48	12.56	2.84
Gregory Mar 08 S & H	70	0.000%	158.98	1,183.32	89.91	3.50	736	61.5%	0.43	12.92	2.66
S & B March 08 S & H	71	0.000%	153.97	1,161.49	80.36	3.25	741	61.5%	0.51	12.97	2.82
<b>AVES for 2007-08 Cattle</b>	1,442	2.080%	\$147.10	\$ 1,048.51	\$ 79.15	2.95	714	61.4%	0.49	12.2	2.97

Death loss at 2.080% was higher than normal for the Beef Challenge Program; however, eight out of the 20 pens had no deaths. Of the 1,442 calves that were shipped, 1,091 had no health treatments beyond the group health treatments. Charges for group treatments included the cost of vaccination, parasite control, and implants in which all animals in a group were treated.

The other 351 calves had some type of individual health treatment where an animal is individually sorted off and treated. Charges for these treatments included both the chute charge and drug cost and may have included a trip charge if a veterinarian was called. The charges for individual health treatments ranged from \$1.00 per calf up to \$206.36 per calf for a total of \$14,443.40 in additional health treatments.

The overall average daily gain at 2.95 pounds per day was lower than normal for our calves. However, our range was from a high of 3.50 to a low of 2.47 pounds per day. Other than death loss, performance is the single most important factor in determining profitability.

Average fat cover was 0.49 inches; the target is 0.40 to 0.45 inches of fat cover. The current industry average is 0.52 inches of fat cover. The average Calculated Yield Grade was 2.97, and the ribeye area average was 12.2. The pen average range for ribeye area was from a low of 11.24 square inches to a high of 13.15.

Sixty-one percent of the Georgia Beef Challenge carcasses had a Quality Grade of Low Choice or better. The industry goal is 70 percent Low Choice or better.

A total of \$30,710 in Age and Source Verification Premiums were added to the base price of our animals. Premiums were received by the owners of 1,150 eligible calves that were enrolled in the program. In today's economic conditions, these additional dollars are certainly welcome.

Only 6 of our carcasses were under 550 pounds, and none were over 1,000 pounds. Over 99 percent were within the 551 – 1000 lb. range with neither light nor heavy carcass penalties.

Defects were found in 16.5% of the animals shipped. Defects included trim, bad eye, disposition, horns, lungs, rat tails, one dark cutter, one that was pregnant, and one staggy. All defects represent a deduction straight off the profit of those animals. Even though disposition does not show up as an identifiable carcass trait, it does affect performance and lowers quality grade. Over 44 percent of our

calves had average disposition scores from 1.0 – 1.8. Over 9.8 percent had scores over 3.0. TCSCF research data shows a loss of \$62 per head for cattle with disposition scores of 3.0 or higher. In order to address these problems, we must select for disposition in our cow herds; use polled bulls or proper de-horning technique, monitor respiratory problems (pneumonia in a calf can result in trim on a lung at harvest); and use proper castration technique.

TCSCF data shows average daily gain is reduced by 0.35 to 0.50 lbs. per day for cattle with lung adhesions. Research at Iowa State University shows a 34 lb. reduction in weaning weights in calves with bad eyes. During the feedlot phase, the calves fall another 34 lbs. behind their contemporaries that have normal eyes.

The primary objective of the Georgia Beef Challenge has been to get back individual carcass data on the calves that are shipped. That objective continues to be achieved. In addition, the 2007-08 program resulted in 724 of the 1,442 calves shipped (50.2 percent) actually earning a profit over the value that was placed on each animal in Georgia by USDA Livestock Market Reporters. (Profits on a per head basis on those 724 calves ranged from \$0.08 to \$472.54.)

There are 1,516 calves (1,054 steers and 462 heifers) that have participated in the 2008-09 Georgia Beef Challenge. Four of those pens have not been closed out with the last group scheduled to be harvested around the end of September of this year.

The 2009-10 Program started the first week of July. Two pens of calves have been shipped since that time. We firmly believe that data and predictability will be important in our industry in the years to come. Participants in the Georgia Beef Challenge will be in position to attract attention whatever might happen to the market. Results have proven that our genetics are as good as anywhere in the United States.

If you have calves you wish to consign, contact your local county Extension Agent or Patsie Cannon at 229/386-3683 ([ptcannon@uga.edu](mailto:ptcannon@uga.edu)) or Dr. Ronnie Silcox at 706/542-9102 ([rsilcox@uga.edu](mailto:rsilcox@uga.edu)). They can furnish you with the entry information and preconditioning protocol to get your calves ready. In addition, feel free to access the website at [www.tifton.uga.edu/pc-web](http://www.tifton.uga.edu/pc-web) to view Georgia Beef Challenge information and final reports. An additional website that may be of interest is [www.tcscf.com](http://www.tcscf.com) which is maintained by the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity Cooperative.