

COMMODITY

BEEF

Description

Beef cattle are raised throughout British Columbia. The majority of producers run either a cow/calf or cow/yearling operation. There is also a small but important feedlot sector. Production practices vary throughout the province, depending on the local climate and other factors.

Cow/calf operators produce calves for sale. Most cows calve in the spring, although some producers are breeding their cows to calve as early as January or as late as June. There are also a few producers who calve in the fall. Cows and calves are turned out in the late spring to graze on pastures or Crown range until fall. Bulls are turned out with cows during the spring and summer so that they may breed.

Calves are typically weaned in the fall, at the age of six to eight months. Most cows are over-wintered at the home ranch. They are fed conserved feeds that have usually been produced on the home ranch. Weaned calves are either sold to the feedlot sector or over-wintered on the ranch. Over-wintered calves may be sold in the spring or allowed to graze for the summer and sold the following fall.

Feedlot operators feed cattle (calves, yearlings, cows and bulls) until they reach a target weight. Some cattle are fed until they reach a “finished” or slaughter weight. Other producers feed their cattle for a target period of time and then ship them to another feedlot for finishing. Feedlot rations may be predominantly forage or grain. Because of grain costs, most feedlot rations are forage based.

Cattle producers and feedlot operators require access to water for livestock watering. They use such farm equipment as trucks and tractors. On-site infrastructure may include livestock watering systems, barns, corrals and handling systems, storage sheds and fences.

Cattle producers and feedlot operators may raise forage crops and require access to water for irrigation. They use such farm equipment as trucks, tractors, cultivators, harvesters and sprayers and may use pesticides and fertilizer on their crops. Refer to the Commodity sheet “Forage”.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to beef production include:

Cattle Care, Handling and Transportation

Beef cattle may be tagged, branded or otherwise identified. They may be handled in a variety of corrals, chutes and squeezes. They may be transported by herding or by vehicles ranging from pickup trucks to large livestock liners. Veal (dairy) calves may be fed to finish.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)
[Transportation](#)
[Pest Management](#)

Feeding

Beef cattle can be pastured throughout the forage-growing season having access to pasture and range 24 hours a day. Producers require authorization to graze livestock on Crown land. Beef cattle may also be fed hay, silage or grain mechanically in buildings or on crop fields.

See Farm Practice: [Feeding and Watering](#)
[Stationary Equipment](#)
[Mobile Equipment](#)

Livestock at Large

Beef cattle may be 'at large' in designated Livestock Districts but not in Pound Districts.

See Farm Practice: [Livestock at Large](#)

Machinery Operation

Field equipment may be operated 24 hours a day.

See Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)

Mortalities

Mortality disposal good practices vary by the cause of death, local climate and surrounding land use.

See Farm Practice: [Mortality Disposal](#)

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to beef producers include the following:

Provincial

Livestock Act – establishes and regulates Livestock and Pound Districts

Livestock Identification Act – establishes registration of livestock brands

Meat Inspection Act – regulation of animal slaughter and sale of meat and byproducts

Motor Vehicle Act – regulates cattle drives on public roads

Local Government

Applicable *Animal Control Bylaws* and *Meat Inspection Bylaws* where in place.

Publications

Publications that provide information on beef cattle production include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Beef Cattle

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Veal Calves

Riparian Management

Why Brand?