



From *Illinois Ag in the Classroom*
[Beef Ag Mag](#)

BIRTH — TO — WEANING

A cow-calf farmer who maintains a breeding herd of cows that raise calves every year. When a calf is born, it weighs 60-100 pounds. Beef calves are weaned at 6 to 10 months of age when they weigh 450-

The gestation (pregnancy) period for cows is 9 months. Beef production begins with a

700 pounds. After the calves are weaned, some are sold at an auction market. A cow-calf farmer may also choose to keep the best females to add to the breeding herd. Younger or lighter weight calves may be sent to a backgrounder or stocker who continues to graze them on grass or other forages until they are 12 to 16 months old. They may also go directly from the cow-calf farmer to the feedlot or from the backgrounder/stocker to the feedlot.

FEEDLOT



Most beef cattle spend approximately four to six months in a feedlot, just prior to harvest, where they are fed a grain-based diet. At the feedlot (also called feedyard), cattle are grouped into pens that provide space for socializing and exercise. They receive feed rations that are balanced by a professional nutritionist. Feedlots are efficient and provide consistent, wholesome and affordable beef using fewer resources. The time cattle spend in a feedlot is often called the "finishing phase." All cattle spend the majority of their lives grazing on grass pasture.

BEEF has 10 ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS



IRON
helps your body use oxygen.



CHOLINE
supports nervous system development.



PROTEIN
helps preserve and build muscle.



SELENIUM
helps protect cells from damage.



ZINC
helps maintain a healthy immune system.



PHOSPHORUS
helps build bones and teeth.



NIACIN
supports energy production and metabolism.



RIBOFLAVIN
helps convert food into fuel.



VITAMINS B6 and B12
help maintain brain function.

Animal Identification

Farmers use many ways to identify their animals:

brands, tattoos, ear notches and ear tags. Animal identification allows farmers to observe each animal very closely when it comes to their growth, weight gain, offspring and even how much feed they are eating.

Complete this activity to become more familiar with forms of animal identification.



The U.S. supplies 19% of the world's beef with 9.4% of the world's cattle.

More than "MEATS" the Eye



We get more than meat from beef cattle. You may be surprised to learn that paint is made from beef cattle—as well as many other products. These are called beef by-products. Because of these by-products, we are able to use 99% of every steer. Some examples of these by-products include candles, crayons, cosmetics, detergent, insulation, plastics, soaps, pet foods, piano keys, luggage, wallpaper, insulin for diabetes, car polishes, textiles for car upholstery, basketballs, baseballs, and footballs. In fact, 11 basketballs, 144 baseballs, or 20 footballs can be made from 1 cow hide. 700,000 footballs are produced annually for the NFL, which means around 35,000 cowhides are used for one single professional sport each year.

Illinois
AGRICULTURE
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