



Does your Trucking Company Make a Difference?

According to a stockering operation in New Mexico, the trucking company you choose can have a substantial financial impact- \$22.50/head in losses. That's right! Will Pape, Soaring Eagle Ranch, has been using AgInfoLink's BeefLink™ information system to record performance data on an individual animal basis since its inception. In a five year time period, Pape used three different trucking companies to haul his stocker cattle from New Mexico to the Texas panhandle where they enter the feedyard. By obtaining feedyard in-weights, Pape determined when he used one specific trucking company; the animals shrunk 1.5% more than comparable loads. But that's only the beginning. After further review of re-implant weights, Pape found that cattle shipped by this specific company gained less in the first 45 days on feed. When Pape shipped 750 lbs animals with this company, he lost 11.25 lbs/head in extra shrink and another 18.75 lbs/head in the first 45 days on feed. Shipping with this company, he lost 30 lbs/head, which equates to approximately \$22.50/head. *(Will Pape, Soaring Eagle Ranch and BeefLink™ user)*

Is it Feed Conversion or Social Dynamic?

When you put a group of animals in a feedyard pen, some rise to the top of the pecking order reaping the rewards associated with good bunk time and relaxation- weight gain. Other animals fall to the bottom of the social order with the opposite outcome- short feeding time and anxiety. Approximately 15% of all animals in a pen have poor gain due to pecking order problems. A feedyard using the BeefLink™ found that by identifying these animals at re-implant time, and segregating into their own pen, animals increased gains from less than 1.75 lb/day to over 3.0 lb/day. The gains come from reduced days on feed and are spread over all the animals in the pen, not just poor-doers. By enhancing 'Poor-Doer' performance, we've seen a positive economic benefit of **\$8.65/head**. *(Canadian Feeder, BeefLink™ User)*

What Don't We Know About Pinkeye?

When you have individual animal performance data from each segment of the production chain, you can make important operational assessments. A stockering operation using the BeefLink™ system looked closely at performance data from a three-year period on cattle that were tracked from birth to slaughter. These animals were slaughtered in a grid program, and the owner had access to extended carcass data. When reviewing live animal data and carcass data, he made an important discovery. Any animal that had been diagnosed with pinkeye at any time during its life never performed better than the bottom 20% of their respective harvest groups. *(Will Pape, Soaring Eagle Ranch and BeefLink™ user)*

Commingling is Worth It

An innovative feedyard in Texas uses the Beeflink™ program to sort and commingle cattle of different ownership into uniform harvest groups. According to old feedyard tradition, a pen is ready when half of the cattle are over fed and the other half are under fed. That strategy just doesn't work when you're getting paid on the grid. By sorting heavy cattle off before the lighter cattle are ready, you not only decrease your risk of heavy carcasses,

you also give the less aggressive cattle a chance to catch up and reduce their risk of being too light. Sorting ready cattle and commingling ownership reduces packer discounts for lights and heavies and takes advantage of trucking efficiencies that can be lost when each owner's cattle have to be kept separate. *(Current BeefLink™ User, TX)*

The Consumption Curve

When cattle come into the feedyard, a natural feed consumption curve starts with a rapid increase in feed consumption that eventually plateaus and then drops off significantly at the end of the feeding cycle. In a feedyard in Texas, a BeefLink™ user is able sort off the heavy cattle before consumption begins to drop. The move has a ripple effect throughout the pen. The feedyard doesn't waste feed on cattle that aren't converting, and lighter cattle with higher efficiencies have more bunk space and less competition from aggressive, faster gaining cattle. The result - ADG throughout the entire pen increases. *(Current BeefLink™ User, TX)*

The System Pays for Itself

When Bob Stewart started using the BeefLink™ system, he made an investment in a Dell laptop computer and a Digistar scale. Bob used his new system for the first time to weigh a group of cattle headed to the packing plant where they would be harvested on a grid. Bob sorted those cattle- the heavies were sent to a fat cattle sale and the under weights stayed on feed. If he had sold that entire pen on the grid, he would have lost more in the discounts taken on heavy and light cattle than he spent on his new scale and computer. The system paid for itself the first time it was used. *(Bob Stewart, Stewart Farms, Iowa BeefLink™ user)*

How Many Head do You Run?

That's a good question. Inventory management is a critical issue for cattle producers, especially those who face harsh environmental conditions. WM Cattle Company thought they had lost some cattle that had fallen through ice during long cold mid-western winter, but it was difficult to determine how many. It wasn't until they started using BeefLink™ that they could accurately maintain a headcount of their herd. In the spring while working cattle, they discovered ten cows preg-checked the previous year could not be accounted for this year. *(WM Cattle Company, Illinois BeefLink™ user)*

Credible Research

The AgInfoLink™ system has been used in several research projects as a timely and accurate way to collect performance data at the chute. BeefLink™ has been an incredible advancement from the old days of recording data with paper and pen or even trying to type data into a spreadsheet. The system has also given the research a great deal of credibility. A group of cattle brought to the research facility can have differing backgrounds, vaccinations and treatments. This history is very often important as it can make a difference in the results of later research projects. Historical data provided in each individual animal record allows researchers to make appropriate decisions regarding which animals can be used in certain studies. *(Lethbridge Research Station, Canadian BeefLink™ User)*

StockLink™ Comes to You

Before finding AgInfoLink™, the Cowan family had simply outgrown the pen and paper method of collecting data. "There was no way we could keep up with the pace we were

processing cattle. Once we saw BeefLink™, we knew we had found the tool that fit our needs,” says Tigh Cowan. Their operation quickly adapted to the chute side use of BeefLink™ and TagTracker™ RFID reader. The Cowans believe their ability to sort cattle and maintain process verification records has given them a \$3-5/head advantage in addition to high quality and favorable animal health. The Cowans now help other cattle producers capture economic benefits with the BeefLink™ program through StockLink, a custom processing and data collection service using the AgInfoLink™ system. *(Stocklink™, South Dakota BeefLink User)*

Good Cattle Bring Top Dollar

When you raise high quality beef you want a price that pays you for the work you put into your herd. Easier said than done because traditional means of marketing cattle don't ensure that you will be paid for value. Jerry Kusser, K Lazy K Ranch, worked with Stocklink™ to make certain he took advantage of the best marketing options for his cattle. Kusser used his individual animal performance, health, and previous years' carcass data to leverage a \$15/cwt premium over local market price on the sale of his 400 steers. Kusser said, “After seeing what StockLink™ could do at the chute, we knew we could do something special with these calves. We were sick and tired of getting same old average price.” *(Jerry Kusser, South Dakota StockLink™ Customer)*

Taking an In-Depth Look

Dr. Jerry Gresham has used the AgInfoLink™ system in conjunction with the Classic Ultrasound machine to more accurately predict performance of grass cattle, replacement heifers and seedstock. Using the ultrasound equipment and BeefLink™ program, Jerry measures rib eye area, fat thickness and marbling to determine when the animal will be likely to be graded choice. In addition to facilitating data collection at the chute, AgInfoLink™ provides a database for storage and a means by which the data is imported into a predictive template. Using the final calculations, Dr. Gresham has the ability to make statements relative to correlations and possible links between physical characteristics and grading. *(Jerry Gresham, BeefLink™ user)*

Border Bonuses

BeefLink user Hector Martinez saw a \$56.00/head advantage when using the AgInfoLink system to manage cattle individually. Martinez tagged cattle at his ranch, the point of origin, and collected performance information. Then he used that information to document the high quality of his cattle, securing a better price for the cattle when sold to AzTx Feeding Company in Texas. Believing the performance information was important; AzTx continued to collect performance data at the feedyard. All weights and treatments were recorded and passed back to Martinez using AgInfoLink's Pony Express Relay Database. Carcass data was obtained from IBP and passed back to AzTx and Martinez completing the “ranch to rail” information collection. Taking a close look at the data, Martinez saw that cattle from this group had better feed efficiencies and overall health than other groups he had fed. He also determined that by eliminating the bottom 20% of the group, he could have increased his premiums to \$94.00/head. *(Hector Martinez, Rancher in Mexico and BeefLink User)*

Beyond Beef

The National Sheep Breeders Association operates a cooperative sheep feedlot in Central Mexico. Multiple ownerships in this lot have always presented management difficulties, especially when providing performance information. In the past, the manual systems in place to record information were time consuming and inaccurate, but the only

option available. In 2000, the use of BeefLink™ made an enormous difference in management efficiency. Each animal was managed as an individual unit that could easily be tied to owner in the BeefLink™ program. Accounting and disseminating accurate performance data has never been easier. The feedlot managers have made plans for expanding BeefLink™ use into other areas. *(National Sheep Breeders Association Feedlot, Mexico)*

Management Makes Money

If you ask Ramiro Guzman, Manager of a Stockering operation in Monterrey, Mexico, he'll tell you that efficiencies gained through proper management earns him at least \$30/head. A user of individual management systems for several years, Guzman, has a database of complete animal histories from different suppliers. Using this historical information, Guzman has identified the origin of top-performing cattle and has eliminated cattle and suppliers that don't work. He bases his decisions off of weights, health records and carcass information that have been collected throughout each animal's life. When Guzman sells his cattle, even without premiums, he knows that those from origins with winning track records will garner him a \$30/head reward through management efficiency. *(Ramiro Guzman, Monterrey, Mexico and BeefLink™ User)*

Stanbroke Reduces Processing Time by Two Thirds

One of the largest cattle companies in world, Stanbroke Pastoral Company, has used the BeefLink System to gain incredible management efficiencies. In the past, Stanbroke used barcoded-eartags on all their feedlot cattle, and additionally used electronic identification tags for a small number of cattle destined for specific markets. But this all changed when they realized how the BeefLink™ software, EID tags and panel RFID reader could enhance their processing routine. In the normal course of business, Stanbroke re-weighs cattle before they are sent to the packinghouse, sorting off light and heavy cattle to avoid penalties. In the past, this process involved the stockmen walking down the race where about 20 head were held at a time and manually writing down each ear tag number in sequence. As each beast entered the crush, the stockman recorded the corresponding weight and pen number. The process was time-consuming and prone to transcription error. When the BeefLink™ system was introduced; the re-weighing routine was significantly automated. Now when an animal enters the crush, the panel reader scans the EID tag and a weight is taken automatically. The stockman uses a barcode reader to scan a pen number. All data is recorded in the BeefLink system at the crush. The implementation of the BeefLink™ program reduced Stanbroke's normal processing time by between 60 to 75%, a tremendous savings in labor cost and stress to the animals. This gain has been a catalyst for Stanbroke to decide to use RFID tags on all their feedlot cattle. *(Stanbroke Pastoral Company, Australian BeefLink™ User)*

Anyone Can Use Pocket PC™

CPC in Australia was the first user of AgInfoLink's Pocket PC™, handheld device, with AgInfoLink's data collection software and durable RFID Palm Reader. AgInfoLink worked with CPC on the development of this tool because there was a need for a durable hand-held machine that any stockman could use. CPC wanted to do away with high dollar computers and elaborate training. The cooperative effort has resulted in an easy to use hand-held computer that requires very little training time. *(CPC, Australian BeefLink™ User)*

Just Listen

Jenny McCamley reaffirmed the value of BeefLink's™ key-speak function recently. McCamley observed that the speak-back function was very important and made

processing cattle a lot easier. It's simple to make a mistake and let a beast out of the crush before it has received all of its treatments. That's why a processing crew has to work as a team constantly communicating. If they don't, the mistakes can add valuable time to the process. With the speak-back function, BeefLink™ will play a sound file for each treatment given to the animal. In Jenny's case the stockmen know to listen for the final event, and then they are fine to let the beast go. *(Jenny McCamley, Australian BeefLink™ User)*

Randall County Feedyard Finds Efficiencies

AgInfoLink partnered with Jordan Livestock Auction, San Saba, TX to launch one of the most successful pre-conditioned premium calf sales to date. Cattle were tagged and vaccination histories were recorded using BeefLink™. The first sale of 5,000 head drew cattle from a 600-mile radius and boosted significant premiums to the producers and cost savings to the buyers. Randall County Feedyard believes that pre-conditioned cattle with a verified production history are responsible for 12% reduction in operating costs.

Randall County

- 1,900 head purchased from Jordan Livestock Auction pre-conditioned sale in November 1999. 12 head in sick pen at 21 days
- Reduced six feed trucks to two feed trucks
- Reduced Mill Operating Time- 7:00 pm stopping time to 2:00 pm
- Reduced Rations from thirteen to four
- Reduced the number of employees from 67 to 40

The reduction in operating costs listed above can easily translate into a \$3.50/head premium. A further reduction in pharmaceutical costs due to good health could translate into approximately \$5.25/head. *(Randall County Feeders, purchased cattle enrolled in BeefLink™)*

Back to the Source

Brian Mogler, a feedlot owner in Northwestern, Iowa, uses the BeefLink™ program to record performance data on in-coming cattle. He uses a series of customized reports to analyze performance information, comparing one set of animals to another, determining the most profitable cattle sources and predicting optimal shipping dates. Mogler feeds a large number of cattle from ranches in Montana using the BeefLink™ program. In this scenario, the rancher and feeder work together to record the entire animal history. The ranch data such as birth date, birth weight, weaning weight, vaccinations, etc. allow Mogler to manage the cattle to their highest potential. Data collected at the feedyard is passed back to the Ranch level, giving the cow-calf producer a report card of sorts. The rancher can see what animals are performing and make genetic changes to improve the quality of their herds. *(Brian Mogler, Mogler Farms and Iowa BeefLink™ User)*

Niche Marketing

Harrell Ranch, located just outside of Austin, TX, is a unique Kobe beef operation. They market their end product to a niche clientele as "The Champagne of Healthy Beef". Harrell Ranch guarantees their beef is free of growth hormones, antibiotics, stimulant feed additives and growth regulators. They've found it's not enough to offer a guarantee; they have to document their procedures and management practices. At Harrell Ranch, they use the BeefLink program to record and verify their health programs, to track individual animal performance and to monitor their inventory. They can run reports on their herd that break down animals down by location, group, birth date and

other key factors giving them an accurate look at their inventory and performance.
(Howard Kay, Harrell Ranch and Texas BeefLink™ User)

Dakota Prairie Beef

This resourceful feedyard operation wanted to commingle cattle from different owners into uniform outcome groups. Although commingling cattle is a good management strategy, it can create an accounting nightmare. BeefLink™ has allowed Dakota Prairie to put their plans into action, collecting individual animal data at the chute, sorting cattle into uniform outcome groups regardless of ownership and using AgInfoSheets™ customized reports to calculate medicine costs on an individual animal basis. At Dakota Prairie, AgInfoLink's reports make it easy to transfer data into the HighPlains™ accounting system so that the individual feedyard expenditures and packinghouse data can be used for accurate customer billing and payments. Working together the systems make management more profitable and accounting easy.

South Eastern Beef Improvement Program

Mark Williams, Triple W Ranch, has worked with his commercial customers to develop the Southeastern Beef Improvement Program. The program gives Williams an opportunity to see the value of his seedstock throughout the production chain. Calves sired by his bulls in commercial herds are identified, enrolled into the BeefLink™ program, and pre-conditioned. The calves are sent to Platte Valley Feeders where the BeefLink™ is used to capture performance and health data. Platte Valley even added an off-feed weighing to give producers in this program a closer look at feedyard performance. Carcass data is collected and added to BeefLink™ completing the animal's record. AgInfoLink's reporting tools, generate feedback for bull customers documenting calf performance from the ranch to the plant. This service helps commercial cattle producers by giving them a gauge of their performance. It also allows Williams to demonstrate the value of high quality seedstock. *(Mark Williams, Triple W Ranch and Kentucky BeefLink™ User)*

Sorting Works for Feedyard Customer

A feedyard using the BeefLink™ program began sorting to even out cattle sizes within a pen. They started using a two-way sort at initial receiving, heavy cattle to the left and light cattle to the right. After reviewing the first set of carcass data on sorted cattle, they were committed to the process. The feedyard invested in a state-of-the-art hydraulic sorting facility that allows them to sort six-ways directly from the chute. The feedyard now aims for 75lbs weight spread in each pen. *(BeefLink User, Idaho)*

Hitting the Mark

"You can live or die by the grid," says Ed Greiman, a feedlot owner in Iowa. That's why he uses the BeefLink™ program to commingle cattle of different ownerships into uniform outcome groups. This process gives Greiman and his customers the best opportunity to hit specific production targets and take advantage of built-in grid incentives. Eliminating light and heavy cattle and identifying the best marketing options for cattle on an individual basis can have a substantial impact on profitability. Greiman adds, "We can't afford not to use it." *(Ed Greiman, Iowa BeefLink™ User)*

Successful Genetic Source Sale Rounds Up Nearly 500 Head for Sale

Dave Nichols, a well-respected genetic provider in the beef industry, has used the BeefLink™ program to manage a series of Nichols Genetic Source cattle sales. The

AgInfoLink system is used to identify each calf and maintain its vaccination history and ownership information. At the sale barn, cattle from multiple owners are commingled giving buyers the opportunity to purchase truckloads of uniform cattle. A recent Nichols Genetic Source sale in Kentucky attracted buyers from five states and generated premium prices that ranged from **\$3-\$12/cwt** over market price. Cattle involved in the sale must meet stringent qualifications. All must be sired by Nichols genetics bulls, be pre-conditioned according to specifications of Merial's SureHealth™ program, and electronically identified for sorting and data exchange. Information services for the sale are provided by AgInfoLink Global Inc. Glenn Smith, AgInfoLink's USA National Manager, says, "This sale gives producers the opportunity to collect individual animal data at the ranch and receive performance data from the feedyard and packing plant. This is valuable information that allows for management decisions based on actual animal performance."