

Increase In Beef Cited For Tar Heel Farmers

Beef cattle, despite sizable losses in numbers in recent years, may represent one of the greatest opportunities for expansion available to Tar Heel farmers. Beef production traditionally is shifting to the South from the Midwest and West. North Carolina is in a position to have a more important part in this transition, according to North Carolina State University.

They point to the state's large acreages of unimproved pasture land and by-products of sizable wheat, corn and other grain crops as invitations for farmers to produce more beef.

Some progress has been made in this direction in the past 25 years, but the opportunities for more expansion are there, similar to those that existed for turkey and swine two decades ago.

While the state has moved into seventh place in the nation in hog numbers, in broiler chickens and in turkeys, North Carolina ranks only 34th in cattle numbers — this despite an increase of over 500 percent since 1950.

While we have come a long way from a very small beef producing state, the potential is barely scratched," said Dr. Legates, animal scientist and dean of the North Carolina State University School of Agriculture and Sciences.

Don't think any of the farm commodities that produce offer quite the opportunity potential that we have in beef cattle," Legates said.

NCSU dean pointed out that the South is rapidly gaining the predominate producing section of the country. Within the next two to three years, over half of the nation's beef will be produced in the South, with its grazing season and favorable rainfall compared to the traditional producing states in the

South Carolina has just 90,000 head of cattle, compared to a cow herd of 10 million head. Income from the state in 1980 was \$179 million.

Legates anticipates continued growth. "We believe there are a million acres west of Raleigh alone could be in beef production," he said. "Just along the interstate as we drive from Raleigh to Charlotte at acres and acres of productive land that we could be grazing cattle. And there are other opportunities in the Coastal Plain."

In development of this area comes Legates' forecast a large number of all-beef farms where total dependence on beef from cattle alone.

Legates traditionally have a source of supplemental income for our farms," he said. "This is as it is, we feel. Our opportunities are largely in small cow herds and programs that utilize land and by-products of soybeans and other

Forerunner to an existing beef, farmers must have additional assistance, Legates said. Legates are attempting to open our beef cattle program at the University because we are fully aware there are problems that are impeding growth as a beef state."

Legates said the most difficult problem has been maintaining quality pastures. Types of grasses that have been used have been found to be deficient, NCSU scientists are looking for forages that are adapted to North Carolina conditions.

Beef cattle production which is also under development at NCSU is that of using clover stands in pastures. It is well known that beef-producing areas are those that have been fixed with the clover produce more mean heavier calves per acre of grazing.

Farmers are looking for ways farmers can manage legume-grass pastures to maintain the clover stand for periods without reseed. In many cases, these are done in two or



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