

Cattle Report - January 1, 2020: Additional Information

If **beef or milk cows** are reported, expect to “find” 2019 calves reported somewhere in the inventory and/or disposition questions.

A milk cow will generally produce 25 to 70 pounds of milk per day.

Watch out for dairy operations that have every other day milk pickup—they may report the total amount shipped (for 2 days) rather than just what was produced in 1 day.

Technically, a heifer that has had a calf is a cow. However, cattle producers may refer to 2 or 3 year old females who have had calves as “first / second calf heifers”.

The **calves on hand** from the 2019 calf crop in item 4a will generally be accounted for in items 2d (**heifers over 500 lbs**), 2e (**steers over 500 lbs**), and/or 2f (**calves under 500 lbs**).

Calves born between July 1 and Dec 31 will likely weigh **less than 500 pounds** on January 1.

Deaths listed in items 6 & 7 must be equal to or greater than the number of deaths in item 4c (**calves born in 2019 but died** by January 1).

The total **Cattle and Calves on Feed** (item 9) should be accounted for in item 2diii (**other heifers over 500 lbs**), 2e (**steers over 500 lbs**), or possibly 2f (**calves under 500 lbs**).

Cattle are *usually* over 500 lbs before being placed in a feedlot.

Verify that cattle on feed will go directly from the operation to slaughter market.

Be careful NOT to enter an animal in more than one place. Doing this will create an incorrect total.

In many areas, if someone has beef cows, they generally do not have dairy cows, and vice-versa.

REPLACEMENT HEIFERS: Most cow/calf operations and dairy operations will have replacement heifers. So, if item 2a (**beef cows**) is positive, then item 2di (**heifers for beef cow replacement**) will likely be positive. If item 2b (**milk cows**) is positive, then item 2dii (**heifers for milk cow replacement**) will likely be positive.

It is also becoming more common for operations to raise *only* dairy replacement heifers—e.g. no milk cows reported BUT report having a large number of heifers for milk cow replacement.

The **heifers for beef/milk cow replacement** categories (items 2di and 2dii) could include:

- A 6-7 month old “calf” barely over 500 pounds
- A 15 month old, 900 pound breeding age “yearling”
- A 24 month old, 1300 pound “springer” just about ready to calve

Remember, heifers are typically bred around 14-16 months of age, and with a gestation period of 280 days, their first calve will be born when they are about 24 months old.

A farmer would typically keep a similar number of heifers each year as replacements. So of the heifers for beef/milk cow replacement reported, you could “expect” about half of them to have been born in 2019 and the others in 2018. Those born in 2018 would generally be expected to calve in 2020

EXAMPLE: The respondent reports 50 beef cows and 20 heifers for beef cow replacement, of which 10 are expected to calve in 2020. So, of the 20 total heifers, 10 are 2019 heifers (these will be bred in 2020 and calve in 2020) and 10 are 2018 heifers (these are already bred and will calve in 2020)

These “rules of thumb” work out nicely for beef cows as they typically calve all together in the spring. The numbers can get...much less straight-forward for operations that: split their calving across 2 calendar years, have multiple calving seasons in 1 calendar year, for milk cows and heifers for milk cow replacements as these typically calve year round, etc.

CALF CROP FOR 2019: Since the gestation period for cattle is 280 days (just over 9 months), a cow or heifer will only calve once per year. Twins are relatively rare and each cow “usually” has one calf per year, so the birth rate should be around 90-100% (about 1 calf per 1 cow).

This means that item 2a and/or 2b (**beef cows, milk cows**) should be very close to item 5 (**total calves born during 2019**). If the birth rate is not close to 100%, please make sure item 4 (**calves on hand, sold/moved, died**) was completed correctly and that item 2a and/or 2b are correct.

All item 4 (**calves on hand, sold/moved, died**) entries **MUST** be calves born on the farm in 2019. Calves born elsewhere and moved onto the farm and still-born calves are **EXCLUDED**.

OUT OF BUSINESS: Watch out for the operations that say they are “out of business” or are “no longer farming” **BUT** have actually just quit raising cattle. If they still have crops, hay, other livestock, etc. they are *still* in business