WE    RAISED    BEEF    CATTLE

9/26/16
Raising beef cattle requires a long term commitment and special resources.  However there comes a time due to health and other circumstances that we must re-evaluate our situation, that has occurred on our home farm. Due to these conditions we have joined the ranks of many older farmers and liquidated our small herd of 35 head.

Beef cattle raising represents the largest segment of Tennessee and American agriculture. More Tennessee and U.S.A. Farms are classified as beef farms than any other type farm or ranch.

The raising of beef cattle involves several farms/ranches, each having a unique role.  During each phase, the American farmer/rancher strives to provide American families a safe, high quality and nutritious food.

The beginning of raising beef cattle is the cow/calf farm/ranch.  This was our main emphasis when raising beef cattle.  We were cow/calf farmers maintaining a breeding hers of 35 cows that raised calves each year.  Our calves weighed 75 to 100 pounds at birth, we preferred the lighted birth weight calves. Over the next few months ( 6 to 7 ) the calves lived and grew from cows milk and grass from our pastures.

Our calves were generally weaned at 6 to 7 months of age, weighing 600 to 700 pounds. The calves then went through a pre-conditioning program. They received a series of vaccinations to boost their immune system to prevent infections and diseases.  During this time they were taught to eat and drink from troughs.  We were aiming for market weights of 800 to 850 pounds.

Several farmers in our area marketed calves at lighter weights to other farmers who continued to raise or grow these calves following weaning. These farmers are stockers or backgrounders, growing lighter weight calves on grass to heavier market weights.

Following the additional growing phase of our calves or stocker calves from other farms these calves were marketed through local livestock auction markets. We were group marketing our calves with other farmers to have sufficient calves to market trailer loads of 48 to 50,000 pounds or 62 to 64 calves of like kinds and weights. The calves marketed by this method generally sell for a better price rather than individual calves at auction markets.

In addition to our pre-condition work for health, nutrition, low-stress handling, we trust this presents a more desirable calf for buyers to send the feed-yard. Our reputation goes with these yearling calves and their performance improves value for future owners and thus improves marketing for future cattle.

The next phase in raising beef cattle is the feed-lot/feed-yard where the calves spend 4 to 6 months. During this time they have room to move around and have access to clean fresh water and are free to eat from feed bunks continuing a carefully balanced diet. Veterinarians, nutritionist and cattlemen continually work together caring for each calf.

Once the beef cattle reach a market weight of 1200 to 1400 pounds, generally at 18 to 22 months of age they are sent to a harvest facility. The U.S.D.A. Inspectors ( trained veterinarians ) are stationed throughout the harvest facility to oversee. The implementation of safety, animal welfare and quality standards from the time each animal enters the facility until the final beef products are shipped to local grocery stores, supermarkets and restaurants for American families food.

These restaurants and super markets are the final steps in beef cattle raising and where beef is sold to American families. During this phase, people take steps to provide American families with the most safe, wholesome and nutritious beef possible.

Proper animal care is the responsibility of everyone in the raising of beef cattle. We have visited feed-lots and harvest facilities where our calves have been processed, to observe the total beef lifecycle. All beef farmers/ranchers, feed-lot Cowboys, harvest facilities, grocery store and restaurant managers (Everyone ) takes responsibility for animal well being because it is the right thing to do for American families food supply.

For articles of interest--
1- [We Are Farmers](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/we_are_farmers.docx)
2- [Why Is Agriculture Important](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/why_is_agriculture_important.docx)
3- [An Enjoyable Day](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/enjoyable_day.docx)
4- [A Trip Down Memory Lane](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/a_trtip_down_memory_lane.docx)
5- [Tennessee Agriculture's Top Ten](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/tennessee_agriculture_top_ten_135_427_thoughts.docx)