

COMMODITY

BEEF

Description

Beef cattle are raised in most regions of British Columbia. The majority of producers run either a cow/calf or cow/yearling operation. A small but important feedlot sector also exists. Production practices vary throughout the province, depending on the local climate and other factors.

Cow/calf operators produce calves for sale. Most cows calve in the spring, although some producers breed their animals to calve as early as January or as late as June. A few producers also manage their operations for fall calving.

Cows and calves are turned out in the late spring to graze on pastures or Crown range until the fall. Bulls are turned out with cows during the spring and summer so that breeding can occur. Calves are typically weaned in the fall at the age of six to eight months. Most cows are over-wintered at the home ranch and fed conserved feeds that have usually been produced on the home ranch. Weaned calves are either sold to the feedlot sector or over-wintered on the ranch. Over-wintered calves may be sold in the spring or allowed to graze for the summer and sold the following fall.

A beef feedlot consists of a confined livestock area used to feed calves, yearlings, cows or bulls for growth and weight gain. Some cattle are fed until they reach a finished slaughter weight. Other producers feed their cattle for a specified period of time and then ship them to another feedlot for finishing. Feedlot rations may be predominantly forage or grain. Because of grain costs, most feedlot rations are forage-based. Livestock housing structures are more intensive in beef feedlot areas than in other phases of cattle production.

Cattle producers and feedlot operators require access to water for livestock watering and may require access to water for irrigation if they raise forage or grain crops. Beef operations incorporate a variety of equipment, including trucks, tractors, cultivators, harvesters, and sprayers. Producers may use fertilizers and pesticides on their crops. On-site infrastructure may include livestock watering systems, barns, corrals and handling systems, storage sheds and fences.

The commodity fact sheet on forage in this reference guide contains useful related information as well.

See also Commodity: Forage

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to beef production include the following.

Cattle Care, Handling and Transportation

Beef cattle may be tagged, branded or identified by other means. They may be handled in a variety of corrals, chutes and squeezes. They may be transported by herding or by vehicles ranging from pickup trucks to large livestock liners. Dairy veal calves may be housed and fed to desired market weights.

See also Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)
[Transportation](#)
[Pest Management](#)

Feeding

Beef cattle can be pastured throughout the forage-growing season with access to pasture and range 24 hours a day. Producers require authorization to graze livestock on Crown land. Beef cattle may also be fed hay, silage or grain by mechanical means in buildings or on crop fields.

See also Farm Practice: [Feeding and Watering](#)
[Stationary Equipment](#)
[Mobile Equipment](#)

Livestock at Large

Beef cattle may be at large in designated livestock districts but are not permitted free rein in pound districts.

See also Farm Practice: [Livestock at Large](#)

Machinery Operation

Field equipment may be operated 24 hours a day.

See also Farm Practice: [Mobile Equipment](#)

Manure Storage and Use

The management of manure in confined livestock areas such as feedlot operations is critical in ensuring that environmental protection is not compromised.

See also Farm Practice: [Composting](#)
[Manure Storage and Use](#)

Mortalities

Good practices associated with mortality disposal vary, depending on cause of death, local climate and surrounding land use. Beef operators must ensure that required Specified Risk Materials (SRM) permits are in place if dead animals are moved off the farm of origin.

Specified Risk Materials (SRM) are cattle tissues which may harbour the prions related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also known as mad cow disease. Stringent federal regulations govern all SRM management and are an important part of the food safety system to assure trading partners that Canadian beef is a safe product for export.

One important exemption within the federal regulations exists in that they do not apply if the SRM does not leave the farm after an animal dies. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency recommends, however, that producers not apply materials such as compost containing SRM to land that may be grazed by cattle within five years. Similarly, B.C. legislation does not specify requirements or guidelines with respect to SRM management on the farm of origin. The provincial *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation* (AWCR) allows for burial, incineration and composting of animal mortalities on the farm where they died provided that it does not cause pollution.

See also Farm Practice: [Mortality Disposal](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, the principal farm buildings or structures used in beef production settings are typically covered or uncovered confined livestock areas. The existence of roofing over such areas is usually dependent on the amount of rainfall in a given location. Accessory farm buildings may include other types of waste storages, chemical storages, compost storage and processing facilities, grain or hay storage, machine sheds, detention ponds, silos, silage storage in plastic bags, and wood waste storage structures. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those Acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to beef producers include the following.

Federal Legislation

The *Health of Animals Act* enables regulatory control of Specified Risk Material (SRM) to prevent its entry into the animal feed system. The enhanced feed ban regulations under this Act stipulate that producers not feed any animal products containing SRM to livestock and that abattoirs properly identify SRM to ensure that it is removed from the feed system.

Provincial Legislation

The *Livestock Act* establishes and regulates livestock districts and pound districts.

The *Livestock Identification Act* establishes registration of livestock brands.

The *Meat Inspection Act* regulates animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat byproducts.

The *Motor Vehicle Act* regulates cattle drives on public roads.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* protects all animals (other than wild animals not in captivity) from distress during handling or any activities not considered to fall under generally-accepted animal management practices.

Local Government Legislation

Applicable local government legislation may include animal control bylaws and meat inspection bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on beef cattle production include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Agricultural Composting Handbook

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide

Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Composting Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Burial Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animal – Beef Cattle

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Veal Calves

Riparian Management

Why Brand?