

# Managing and Marketing Cull Cows

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# Introduction

- Cull cows often looked upon as a “pain” or a “headache”
- Receipts account for ~20% of income for the cow-calf enterprise

*Feuz, 1999*

- Cows are often sold at culling
  - Is there opportunity to add value?

# Introduction

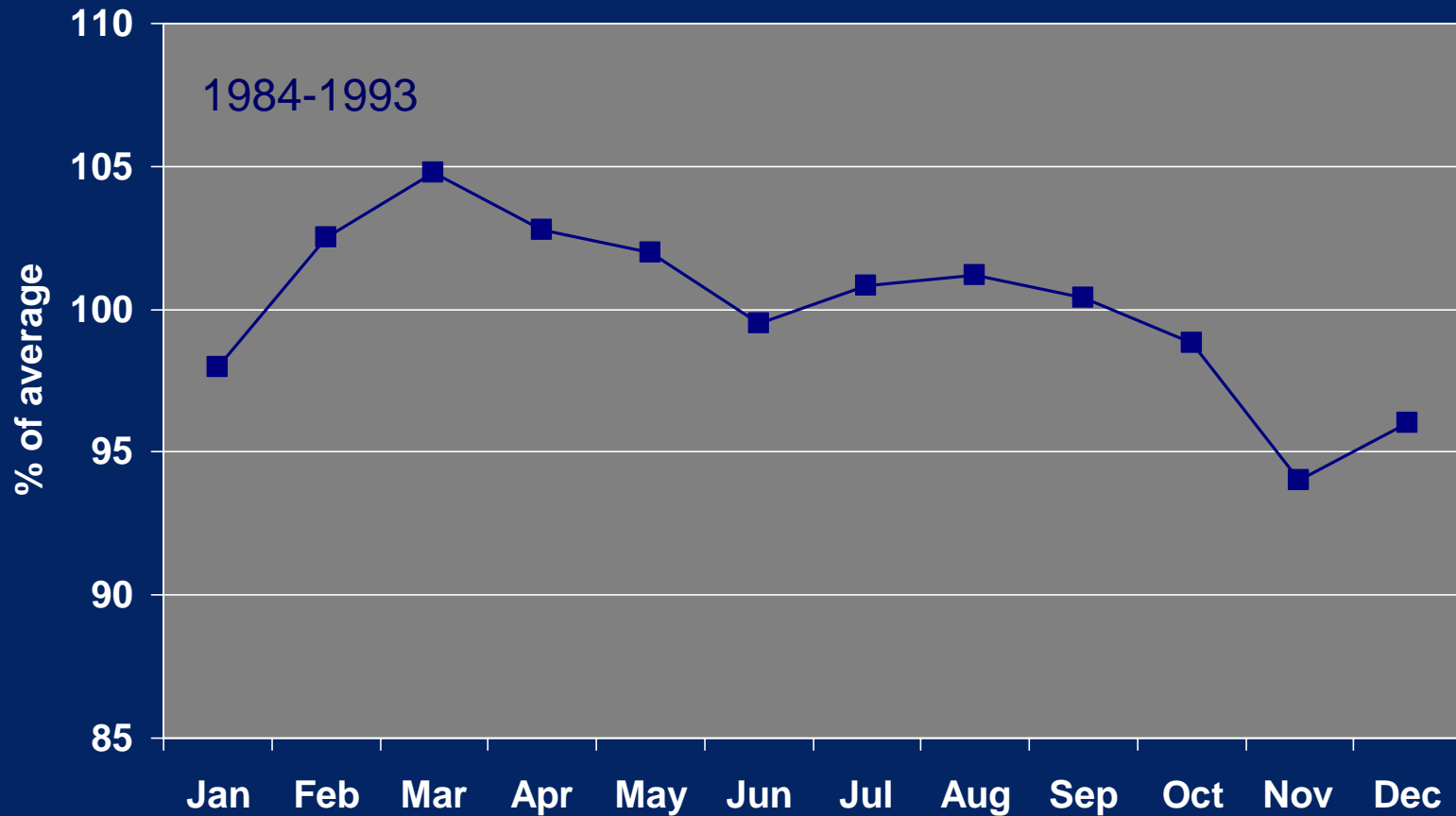
- Three primary factors to be considered in decision to sell or feed cows:
  - Seasonality of prices
  - Price differences between grades
  - Cost of feeding

*Feuz, 1999*



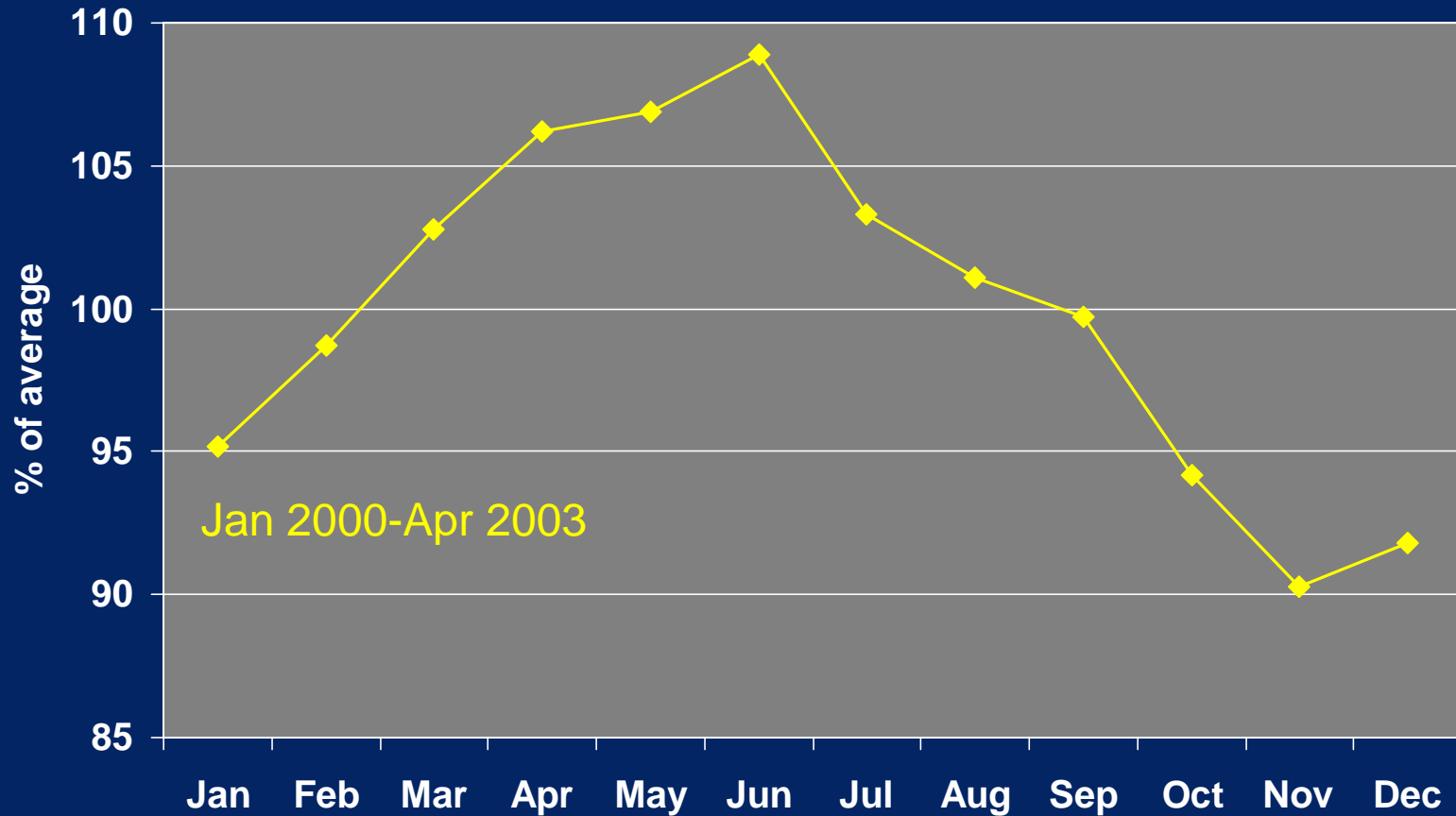
# Utility Cow Prices

Sioux Falls 1984 to 1993



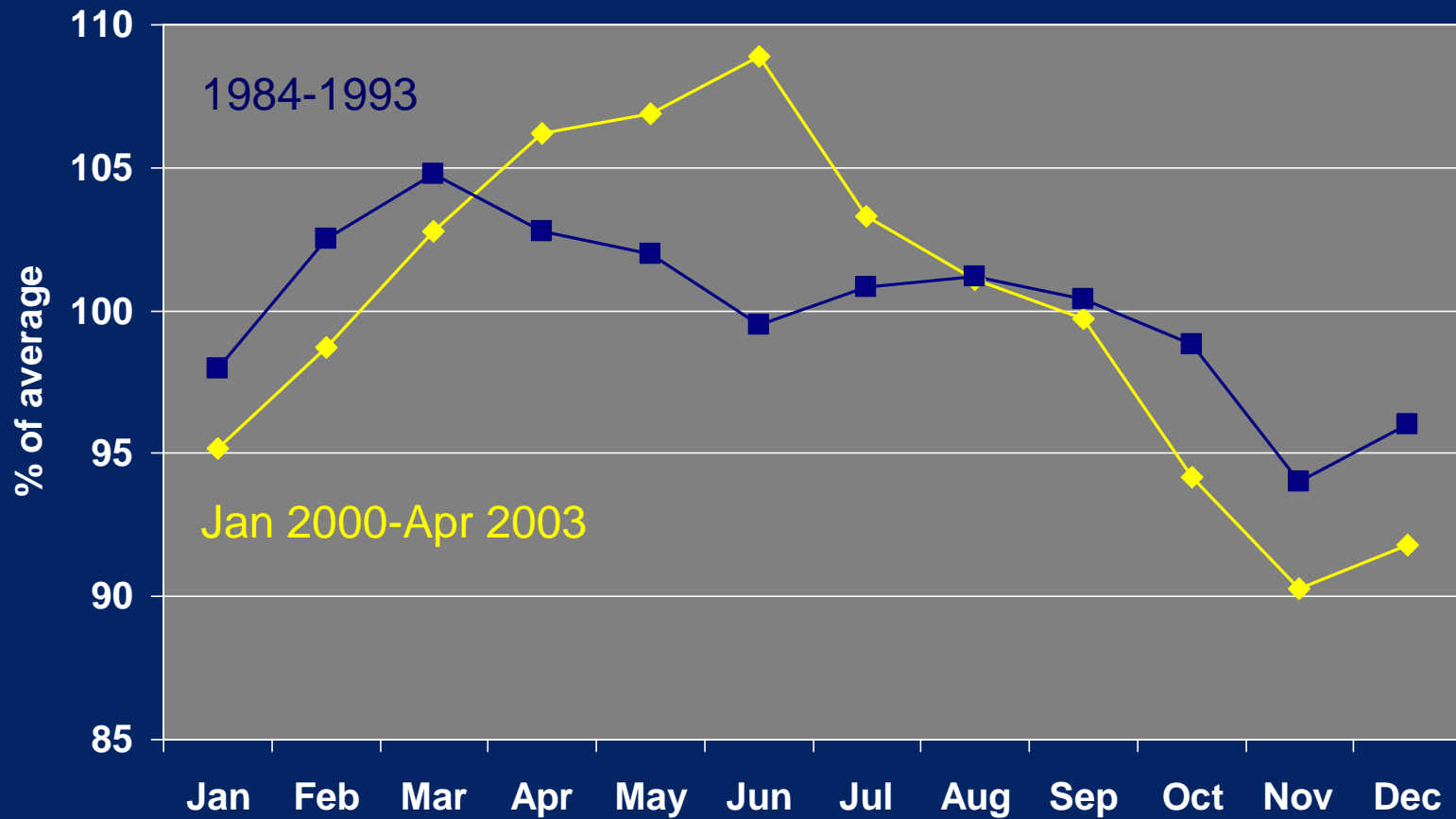
# Average Cow Prices

Sioux Falls January 2000 to April 2003



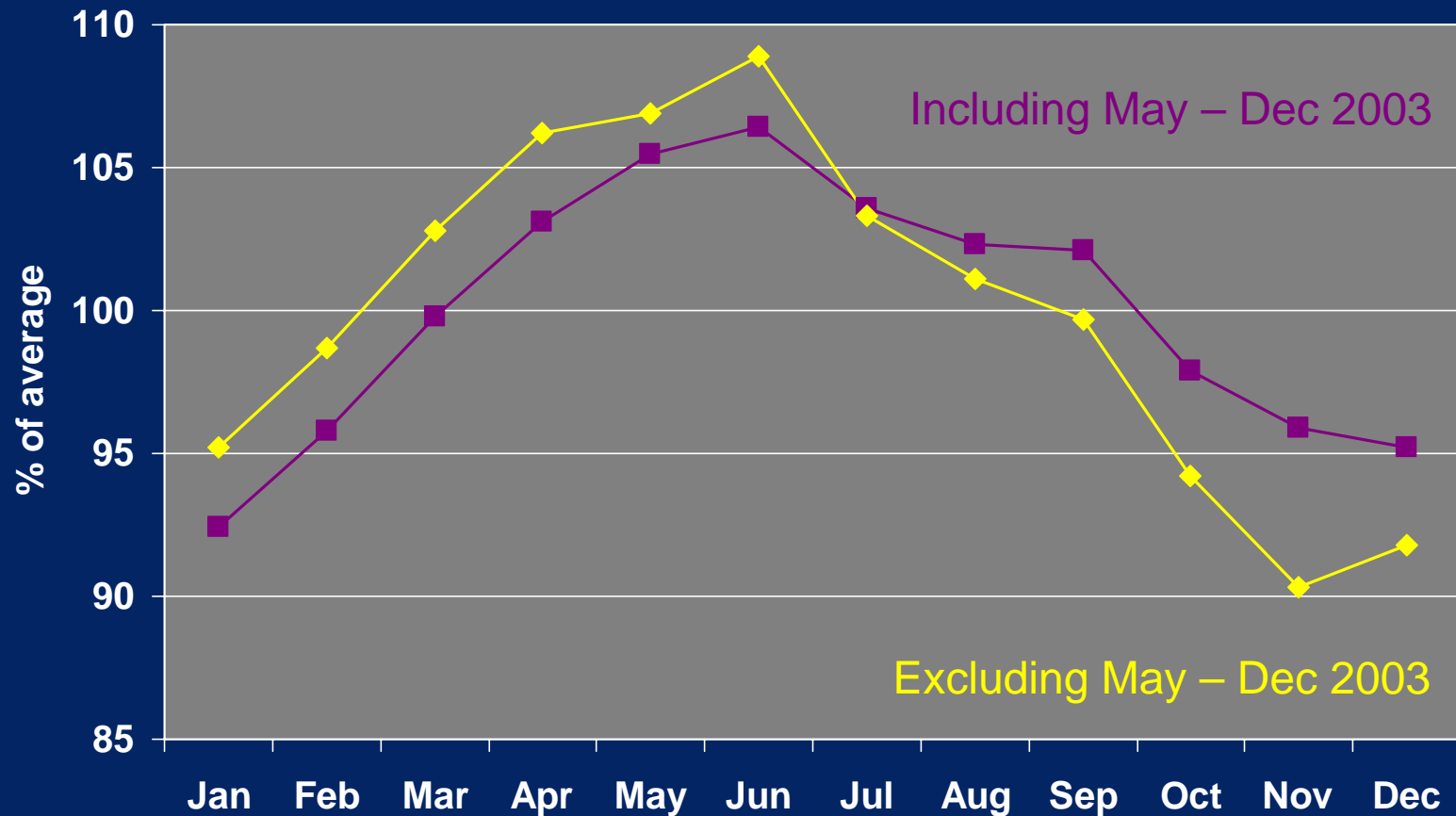
# Cow Prices

## Sioux Falls



# Average Cow Prices

Sioux Falls 2000-2003



# Cull Cow Grades

Commercial

Utility – breaker

Utility – boner

Cutter

Canner

Best



Worst

Prices generally ↓ as grade ↓

# Cull Cow Market

- Potential for improving selling price revolves around:
  - Marketing cows during seasonal highs (or avoid lows)
  - Improve grade
- How can we accomplish that?
  - Sell cows that lose a calf early
  - Sell early-weaned cows early
  - “Feed cows”

# Feeding Cull Cows

- Feeding cows will generally:
  - Add weight
  - Improve grade
  - Delay marketing to more favorable time in price cycle
- Does not necessarily need to be in a feedlot

# Grazing

- Winter range
  - Reasonable gains
  - Supplementation
- Crop residue
  - Rule of thumb: 1 acre/month
  - 1.5 lb/d or more gain
  - Performance depends on amount of corn???



# Grazing

- Crop residue (cont.)
  - Strip grazing is an option
  - May require supplementation late in grazing period
  - Fencing and water supply can be a challenge (particularly on rented ground)

# Feedlot

- Facilities:
  - Cows are generally larger than young cattle
  - Generally require 20"-24" of bunk space
  - May need to adjust yardage charges
- Equipment:
  - Mixer wagon with a scale
  - Self-feeder???

# Diet

- Diets do not need to be exotic
  - Generally target similar nutrient levels as in finishing cattle diets
  - 60 (or more) MCal NEg/cwt and 10% to 12% crude protein
- Locally grown feeds may be an option

# Adaptation

- Cows are generally coming off a forage-based diet
- Need to adapt to high-grain diet
  - Much like yearling cattle
  - Start at ~50 Mcal NEg
  - Work up to finishing diet over 2 to 3 weeks

# Feed Additives

## Ionophores

- Bovatec
- Cattlyst
- Rumensin
- MGA
- Growth promotants
  - Optaflexx



# Implanting

- Not specifically cleared by FDA
  - Generally accepted that implants cleared for feedlot heifers are acceptable for cows
- Generally estrogenic implants don't work as well
  - Estradiol  $17\beta$ , estradiol benzoate, zeranol
- Androgenic implants work better
  - Trenbolone acetate, testosterone propionate

# Implanting

	Control	TBA <sup>a</sup>	<i>P</i> -value
Initial wt, lb	999	1000	NS
Final wt, lb	1224	1238	0.096
ADG, lb	2.89	3.03	NS
DMI, lb	26.97	26.35	0.037
Feed/gain	9.44	8.74	0.053

<sup>a</sup>TBA = 200 mg trenbolone acetate and were on feed for 50, 77, or 105 days.

# Implanting

Item	Effect	P-value
Final BW, lb	40.6	0.02
ADG, lb	0.49	0.01
HCW, lb	39.1	0.01
Backfat, in	NS	NS
LMA, in <sup>2</sup>	1.3	0.01
Marbling score	-26.5	0.02
Yield grade	-0.24	0.05

Cows received 200 mg trenbolone acetate + 28 mg estradiol benzoate and were on feed ~90 days.

# Days on Feed



- Subject to debate
- Depends on:
  - Initial body condition
  - Expected performance
  - Feed cost
  - Marketing

# Days on Feed

Item	42 d	84 d
ADG, lb	6.0 <sup>a</sup>	3.5 <sup>b</sup>
ADFI, lb DM	27.6	29.1
Feed/gain	4.7 <sup>a</sup>	8.4 <sup>b</sup>

Cows either implanted or not implanted.

<sup>a,b</sup>Means in the same row without a common superscript letter differ ( $P < 0.01$ ).

# Days on Feed

	50	77	105	<i>P</i> -value
Initial wt, lb	1009	995	995	0.057
Final wt, lb	1150	1223	1321	0.001
ADG, lb	2.81	2.97	3.10	0.102
DMI, lb	24.9	27.0	28.0	0.001
Feed/gain	8.99	9.20	9.09	NS

Cows either implanted or not implanted.

# Days on Feed

- White fat
  - Research is inconsistent
  - 56 days has altered fat color

*Schnell et al., 1997*
  - 105 days had no change

*Pritchard and Berg, 1993*
  - No clear recommendation
  - Packers generally prefer ~100 days

# Economics

- Feeding cattle will:
  - Add weight
  - Improve grade
  - Delay marketing to more favorable time
- Will likely improve revenue, ***but not necessarily profit!!***

# Economics

- Consider costs:
  - Feed – **MAJOR!!!** – \$1.25 to \$1.50 not out of the question
  - Yardage – \$0.25 to \$0.30 on young cattle
  - Interest
  - Death loss
  - Freight – now in excess of \$3.00 per mile
- Utilize partial budget analysis

# Pregnant Cows

- Not uncommon for pregnant cows to be sold as open
  - 70 of 306 head purchased as opens were pregnant

*Pritchard and Berg, 1993*

- Abortifacients not effective after 150 days pregnant

# Downers

- No longer eligible for human consumption

Food Safety Inspection Service, 2004

- Pay close attention to ailments that hinder mobility
- Market appropriately

# Summary

- Cull cow prices are highly seasonal
  - May be changing
  - Market during seasonal highs...avoid lows
- “Feeding” will:
  - Increase final weight
  - Improve body condition (grade)
  - Delay marketing to more favorable times

# Summary

- Manage cows to keep cost of gain low:
  - Grazing
  - High grain diets
  - Feed additives
  - Implants
- May not always be profitable
  - Partial budget analysis

*Thank You!*

