

Studies Show Cattle Shrink 47 Pounds in Corral Overnight

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DURING a study of range management at the Central Plains Experimental Range in northeastern Colorado, observations were made on the amount of shrink of yearling Hereford range cattle held overnight in a dry lot. As transactions with cattle often must consider shrink under somewhat similar conditions, this information will interest buyers and sellers alike.

The observations were made at monthly intervals throughout the summer grazing season in 1943. Once each month the cattle were gathered in late afternoon and held in corrals overnight without feed or water, weighing out early the following morning before returning to the range. Some 600 head were involved and shrink percentages were determined for 100 to 200 head at each weighing. The cattle were weighed as soon as they were placed in the corrals, after having been gathered from the range

averaged 47 pounds a head, or approximately 3 pounds an hour during the period the animals were in the corrals. The percentage of shrink declined, of course, as the weight of the cattle increased through the season.

An estimate of the rate at which the overnight shrink was regained was possible from a group of heifers that were reweighed after they had been returned to the pasture the following day. During the interval after these animals were returned to the pasture, from 7 a. m. of July 9 to 11 a. m. of July 10, they had made a total gain of 56 pounds a head over their shrink weight. This gain represents fill and one day's gain. As the average loss by shrink during this month was 51 pounds a head, this shows that shrink losses are rapidly replaced as soon as the animals have access to feed and water.

A comparison of the amount of shrink of steers and of heifers is also

Overnight shrink of yearling Hereford range cattle on short-grass range, 1943

Month—	Number Head	Average Full Weight	Average Shrink Weight	Average Shrink Pounds	Average Shrink Per Cent
June	191	502	458	44	8.8
July	141	581	530	51	8.8
August	159	640	593	47	7.3
September	144	699	646	53	7.6
October	64	724	683	41	5.7
November	117	743	699	44	5.9

where they were on full feed and water. In no instance were they driven more than 1½ miles to the corral.

The results shown in the table on this page indicates that on June 10, with an average full weight of 502 pounds a head, the cattle lost overnight an average of 44 pounds, or a shrink of 8.8 per cent. In July the animals weighed 581 pounds and lost 51 pounds, or an average shrink again of 8.8 per cent. In August the animals weighed 640 pounds and lost 47 pounds or 7.3 per cent. In September the weight of the cattle had increased to 699 pounds and the shrink was 53 pounds or 7.6 per cent. During October and November, with full weights of approximately 730 pounds, the cattle lost an average of 42 pounds or 5.7 per cent for October and 5.9 per cent for November.

The pounds lost remained relatively constant throughout the season and

available from these studies. With the exception of August, the heifers appear to have shrunk slightly less than the steers both in actual pounds and in percentage of full weight. These differences, however, are so small that they are not significant. For each class of animals maximum shrink occurred during June and July with the minimum occurring during October and November.

These figures on shrink are indicative of the loss that might be expected when yearling animals are sold direct from summer ranges of the central plains. They are not necessarily applicable in all cases, but do provide a basis from which the seller or buyer may estimate the amount of shrink which might be expected. Adjustments in these figures must be made, of course, if longer drives to the loading chutes are involved, or if the animals are held in corrals for any appreciable period of time before weighing.