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Strnad Paper

Is The Grass Always Greener?

Last fall Chris Dubyak and I started to brainstorm about what we could do with the land we had available to us. Chris, growing up on Barrister Farms, brought up the idea that we could use his farm for our Strnad. We then came to the consensus that we could raise animals on different diets and see how different diets affect the growth and development of these animals. We then went about the process. First we contacted his father, Joe Dubyak, who has raised farm animals all his life. He gave us background about what it takes to be a farmer and what animals would be best to use in our project. After figuring out that cows would be the best animals to work with, we came up with a tentative plan and diet that would make this project an experiment. We then referenced a few books that helped us understand what it takes to be successful as a farmer and what the cows need in order to be comfortable in there new environment at Barrister Farms.

On June 6th, 2004, two cows were delivered to us at Barrister Farms. We were voluntarily given our cows by William Patrick, Mr. Dubyak's cousin who has a business of raising cattle. Prior to the delivery we cleaned and revamped the stalls that these cows would be living in, to make sure they would be in a good environment. These two female calves were beef Hereford cows that when delivered were approximately four months old. We measured the cows with a tailoring tape measure. Because we did not have a scale that was large enough to accommodate cows, we measured them by measuring their front and hind legs and the circumference of their chest. After the delivery we allowed the cows to roam in an initial paddock that they would live in for some time just to get used to their surroundings and then later transfer them to the

adjacent bigger pasture when they reached a more mature size. Since they were calves at the time, Chris and I had to put a tighter knitted fence in so the cows could not escape through the split-railed fence that surrounded the paddock. One of the first steps to making this project work was experimenting and contacting people who have raised a lot of cows. Chris and I called a few places to figure out where to get our food. After consulting a few places, Chris and I went to Chagrin Pet and Garden to figure out the food that would best fit our feeding program. Mike who had raised cattle all his life, told us about two feeds that were both great for feeding. He believed that the Pleasure Sweet feed, the feed we fed to Rosie, would make Rosie larger than the Buckeye quality feed that we fed Sally.

On the morning of July 22, 2004, when Chris went to feed our cows, one of our calves was found in the stall dead. Due to our studies and our readings we performed a few test that made us believe that it died of bloat. Bloat is a digestive disorder that normally happens when cows are brought onto their new environment that is not big enough or they live on an Alfalfa pasture. This was an unlikely case for one of our calves to fall victim to bloat because bloat normally does not happen when on a grass pasture or when given hay which the calve was given both. Bloat occurs when the eructation, or belching mechanism is inhibited which allows an immense amount of carbon dioxide and methane to distend the rumen or stomach. Gases are produced quickly, so if the problem persists, the rumen balloons and the cow starves.



Following the death of this cow, we buried the cow in his paddock. Because the other remaining cow still did not eat well, we gave the cow back to Mr. William Patrick and arranged to buy two more calves around the same age so our project could continue.

Chris and I went out to the Geagua County Fair, to take a look at our one of our calves that we were going to buy. We met the farmer who we bought Rosie and Sally from and he told us all of the information we needed to know about them. He also told us what he gave his cows to beef them up. He suggested that we should use a High Quality 12% Show Feed to beef one up.

When these two female calves were delivered they were around the same age as the original two cows we had, so it did not set us that far back in our process. Rosie was born on February 26th, 2004 and Sally was born on February 23rd, 2004. Although they came from two different mothers, when we received them they both weighed approximately 300 lbs. The initial measurements of Rosie and Sally were a bit larger than the original two cows so we were able to move them directly into the large pasture. We named our cows Rosie and Sally. About a week after they arrived on September 9th, 2004 Chris and I set up low voltage electric fence around the entire pasture, ensuring that the cows would not escape or try and bust through the picket fence.

Our Strnad took up a lot of time and energy. Every day we had to feed them and made sure they had enough hay to eat during the winter as a substitute for grass. We got our feeds from Chagrin Pet and Garden; the higher, richer in protein-feed called Buckeye Quality feed was given to Sally and lower fiber and protein feed was given to Rosie called 12% Pleasure Sweet feed. Our original hypothesis was that Sally would weigh 200 lbs. more than Rosie when we went to sell them at the auction in Bloomfield. But due Sally's high metabolism there measurements remained closely the same.

We continued on our normal path until it was time to sell the cows. Because Chris and I are both going off to college next year, they would have no one to care for if we kept them. We arranged for Mr. Foor, a cattle mover, to come and pick Rosie and Sally up on Monday May 16th. We had to move Rosie and Sally from the large pasture into the paddock in order for us to easily load Rosie and Sally. We arranged Mr. Foor to come and pick up the cows in order for us to transport them to the auction. Rosie's final weight was 540 lbs and Sally's final weight was 470 lbs. After it took us a good deal of time to herd them into the truck from the paddock, Chris, Ms. Yavor and I traveled out Route 87 past Middlefield into Bloomfield to sell our cows. When we arrived there, we checked in at the auction desk and were told that the cows were weighed and ready to be bid on. At the Bloomfield Auction, Rosie and Sally were auctioned off for a dollar per pound—more than any other cow was auctioned for. This proved that the cows were at a great size and weight for how old they were. Their home now lies in Burghill, Ohio, near the Pennsylvania border off Route 88. They were sold to Mr. Ross who owns 6 other Hereford cows on a small farm. When we told Mr. Ross our history of our animals, he

told us that he was going to keep them as pets on his farm and take good care of them.

After the auction was finalized, we said our goodbyes and left the auction.

Contrary to our original hypothesis, Sally, who was fed the high-protein, more expensive show feed, ended up weighing seventy pounds less than Rosie. Either Rosie had a slower-burning metabolism, or the 12% Pleasure Sweet feed is the more effective food when trying to raise a heavier, beefier, fatter cow.