

Cattle dressed weights rose above a year ago for the week ending April 20th after 22 weeks straight of weights coming in below 2018's. Weather played a large role in dressed weights this winter. The largest weekly deficit from the prior year was as high as 17 pounds. Fourteen of the 22 weeks were over 10 pounds below the previous year.

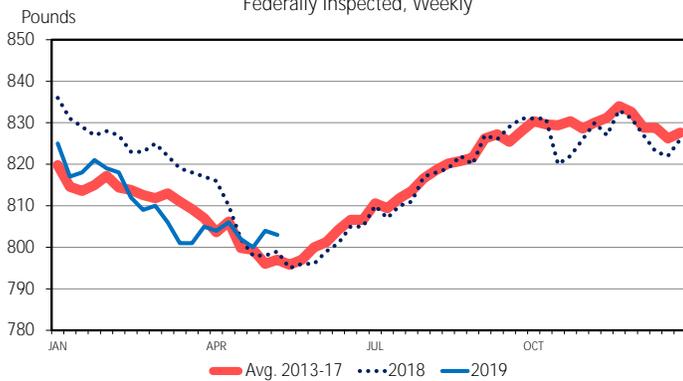
Steer and heifer slaughter, the largest classes of cattle that feed into the average cattle dressed weights, also struggled this winter with feedlot performance. Heifers it appears had a much tougher time with muddy conditions than steers. When compared to dressed weights last year, the total year to date change in heifer dressed weights are equivalent to 25.9 million pounds less beef production. Steer dressed weights, had they been at last year's weights, would have generated an additional 29.0 million pounds of beef. Since the first of the year, heifers have had nine weeks with dressed weights coming in more than 10 pounds lighter than the prior year. Steer dressed weights only had four. Weights for both classes are rebounding strongly in the last three weeks of actual data. Heifer dressed weights are up 6 pounds over the same week in 2018 and steer dressed weights are up 4 pounds.

This strong turnaround is coming at what would typically be the seasonal low for dressed weights. Last year steer dressed weights bottomed below 850 pounds for three weeks, and heifers stayed below 800 pounds for 12 weeks.

It appears that this year's seasonal transition will be muted by a couple of factors. The first is the turn in the weather. Cattle are performing better. Spring is here and conditions in feedlots are much improved, allowing for better weight gains. The second is that the large glut of cattle under 600 pounds and 600-699 pounds that were placed in July/Aug/Sep were very likely on feed longer than normal to counteract the poor performance conditions this winter. Those cattle, which were placed at very high rates compared to the year before are spending closer to 180 days on feed. Using the April (latest) cattle on feed report, we calculate there are about half a million head that have been on feed more than 180 days.

Cow and bull dressed weights have also been notably down this winter as well. Bull weights were down more than 25 pounds in several of the weeks this year. Cow dressed weights, in the largest divergence from the previous year, was 27 pounds. Cow slaughter has been a larger factor this year, up 4% in year to date data. Increased dairy cow slaughter has been a primary factor, as weekly dairy cow slaughter rates have had several weeks at or approaching record large levels. Even though the declines in bull dressed weights are large, bull slaughter has the fewest number of head slaughtered out of all the classes, about 10 thousand a week.

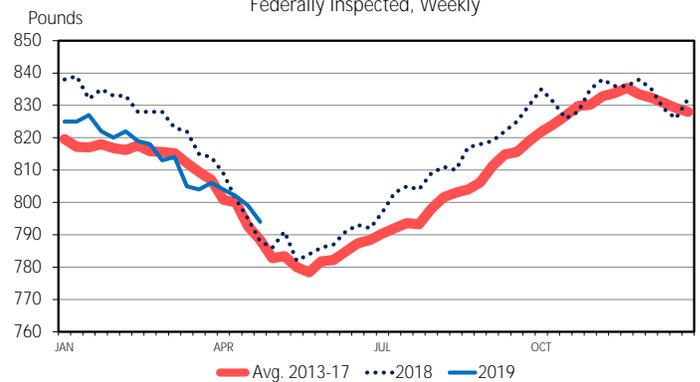
CATTLE DRESSED WEIGHT
Federally Inspected, Weekly



Data Source: USDA-AMS & USDA-NASS
Livestock Marketing Information Center

C-S-18A
05/10/19

HEIFER DRESSED WEIGHT
Federally Inspected, Weekly



Data Source: USDA-AMS & USDA-NASS
Livestock Marketing Information Center

C-S-18B
05/10/19

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