

Montana Winter of 2018-2019

Grass Fed Steers

Home raised steers that qualify as “grass fed” steers were weaned at the end of October and went back to grass May 10th at the end of the test period. These calves had some limited grazing all winter, which was a tough winter even by Montana standards. There were two groups of steers which came off the same set of cows at weaning time. The HydroGreen group was fed 57% grass hay (lower quality grass at \$80/ton) and 43% HydroGreen Barley. The other group received all they could eat of grass hay (better quality grass at \$120/ton), which came to 18lbs per head per day on average. Both groups received 3 ounces of mineral per head per day. The HydroGreen group had an average daily gain of 1.77lbs/hd/d compared to the non-HydroGreen group at 1.07lbs/hd/d. Cost of gain comparison was also significant with the HydroGreen group costing \$0.58 to put on a pound of gain and the grass hay group costing \$1.01 to put on a pound of gain. It was also reported that the HydroGreen group had much better health during weaning and through the entire feeding period, compared to the non-HydroGreen calves. The steer calves in both groups were weighed every two weeks using a pen scale at the producer’s ranch. Given the above Montana example, a producer could feed approximately 260hd off one six section system at 12.95lbs per hd per day of HydroGreen Barley. This feeding rate would be even larger if HydroGreen Wheat was used. If the calves were grown from 450-850lbs, they would be on feed for 226 days. These calves would qualify for most if not all grass-fed programs. They would feed for \$97.19/hd less than the calves fed grass hay only. This group of 260 head would come to market at 850lbs, 148 days sooner assuming the above gains. In addition, it would cost \$25,269.40 less to feed the HydroGreen group. And, that savings does not account for the reduced treatment cost and death loss seen in the HydroGreen group.

