



Mid-Year Review: Inventory, Cattle on Feed, & Expansion Efforts

On July 25th, USDA released the July Cattle Inventory Report. This report provides insight into herd numbers and expansion efforts, specifically heifer retention. This report was not released last year, so estimates will be compared to the 2023 July report rather than providing year-over-year estimates. The July Cattle on Feed report was also released and provided a breakdown of cattle on feed by class giving a sense of how many heifers we are feeding out rather than retaining. While the 2025 July Inventory Report does not include state breakdowns, the numbers reported in both the inventory and cattle on feed reports reflect what is happening across Florida from what I have seen and heard: some producers are thinking of and starting to retain heifers, but the majority are still capitalizing on record-high calf prices.

From 2023, the total number of cattle and calves declined by 1.3% (1.2 million head) to 94.2 million head. The beef cow herd is smaller by 350,000 head at 28.65 million head but increased slightly (2.8%) from the January 2025 report. With all other estimates indicating little to no expansion, this is likely due to the dramatic decrease in cow slaughter we have seen in the first half of the year. We've culled most if not all the "old girls" over the last few years, so it would make sense that culling has slowed. If there are any older cows in the herd, producers are likely hanging on to them to try and get one more high-priced calf out of her in this market, resulting in the slight increase in numbers since January. The 2025 calf crop is estimated to total at 33.1 million head.

The number of beef replacement heifers is down 3% from 2023 at 3.7 million head. The number of "other heifers over 500 pounds" is also 3% lower than 2023, meaning there is a smaller pool of heifers to pull from for any impulse breeding in the back half of 2025 and early 2026. Signs of slow heifer retention are also shown in the Cattle on Feed report where the *number* of heifers on feed was 5% lower than 2024, but the *percentage* of heifers on feed rose by 0.5% since April to 38.1%. For reference, this percentage was in the lower 30s during the last expansion.

Cattle on feed inventory totaled at 11.1 million head on July 1, a 1.6% decline year-over-year. Placements were down by 8% with marketings down by 4%. Tight supplies are becoming more and more evident as we are not able to replace cattle at the same rate they are leaving the feedlots. Overall, expansion is still not in full swing, but stabilization may be this year's theme. With that said, it is unlikely we will see much of an increase in herd inventory going into 2026.

Questions, contact Hannah at h.baker@ufl.edu

See this update and other helpful resources online at <https://rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu/about/directory/staff/hannah-baker/>

Written July 2025

