

## **How do grass fed cows vs non-grass fed cows effect the economy?**

Every farm operation is unique in how it conducts business.

Beef cows/steers are ruminants and derive most of their nutrients from forages like grass. However, to increase the rate of pounds gained per day a concentrated source of energy (corn) is fed to supplement a portion of the grass. Corn grain has 1.5 times more energy than grass. It can take up to four months longer to finish or bring a grass fed steer to market than a grass and corn (conventional) fed steer due to less energy intake per day. While it might take longer (17 months vs. 13 months) to get the grass fed steer to market it is usually less expensive than the grass and corn (conventional) fed steer.

Only with careful budget planning taking these and other factors, such as market prices and labor into consideration, can each farm decide whether grass fed or grass and corn fed is best for their farm business and bottom line.

*By Ron Kuck, Dairy and Livestock Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County*