

# Better Together: Producers and Cattle Truckers

Jason Duggin

*UGA Department of Animal and Dairy Science*

It's calf marketing season for many, and the cattle trucking industry is an essential part that is sometimes overlooked or underappreciated. Good trucking companies and, likewise, good truckers, aid producers in delivering quality cattle that are ready to transition to the next step of the industry, and they need our support. Here are some challenges that the cattle trucking industry faces.

- 1) **Cost of Equipment:** Truck and Trailer = \$315,000 to 330,000
- 2) **Cost of Insurance:** Premium (w/ cattle coverage) = \$12,000 to 15,000 annually per truck
- 3) **Lack of Mechanics for Older Trucks:** Truckers are often forced to purchase new trucks to receive warranty and service.
- 4) **Truck Issues:** Often, it can take 10 days to get a truck into the shop, and it will usually be another 10 days in the shop.
- 5) **Lack of Qualified Drivers:** The cattle trucking industry is starved for qualified cattle truckers that can stay in the business for more than 2 years. If ticketed for an overweight load, truckers are deemed unsafe drivers by the insurance company increasing premiums from \$12,000 up to \$25,000.
- 6) **Cattle trucking in the Southeast is more challenging and less profitable** compared to the west of the Mississippi River. The traffic, increased time frame, wear and tear on the rig, and infrequency of loads and back hauls all make for headaches that cost trucking companies decreased revenue and drivers more headaches.
- 7) **Fluctuation in the cost of fuel:** If the trucker bids a job and the cost of diesel increases by \$0.20 the next week, the trucker is often forced to absorb the increased overhead. The average cost of fuel, as of this writing, is \$0.75 a mile for a 1000-mile trip.
- 8) **Running 65 mph is more profitable than 75 mph:** A reduction in 10 mph improves fuel efficiency (mpg) by 1 gallon. This can add up to thousands of dollars per truck, per year. Arguably, it's also better for the cattle.
- 9) Cattle truck drivers are a dying breed, and as you might expect, there are **very few young people interested in entering the business.**

## Other things to consider when hiring a trucking company

- Will the trucker arrive in an acceptable time window?
- Is the truck and trailer clean?
- Do they know how to properly load to minimize shrink and the possibility of a rollover?
- Will your cattle arrive in the estimated time window without extreme shrink?
- Will they answer my phone call next year? If not, I may be left dealing with whoever I can get last minute.
- Is going with the lowest cost bidder worth my piece of mind on a load of cattle worth over \$100,000?

Cattle truckers are an essential link to the beef cattle industry. To the drivers and business owners that work hard to do it the right way - Thank you for all you do!

Thank you to Brian and Rebecca Penland, owners of C and E Trucking, for their contribution.



UNIVERSITY OF  
**GEORGIA**  
EXTENSION

**Jason Duggin**  
Extension Specialist  
Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences  
College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences  
University of Georgia