Megadon Ranching

Introduction

Megadons are the primary mass market meat source for most people in the Universe. These are a group of related large sauropods that are common across the systems that have been colonised by humanity.

Ranch Structure

Most ranches consist of an armoured concrete structure housing the ranch staff accommodation and offices, specialist feed stores, equipment garages and all necessary power and ancillary functions.

Around this core there are some well protected and fenced off nursery pens, pre-slaughter holding pens and treatment and isolation pens for dealing with sick animals. There will often be an egg-laying enclosure, hatchery and breeding pens.

Outside the secured area there will be a large area of open savannah for the larger animals to graze on. Sometimes this area is split between fenced off portions that are used to grow specific feed crops and unmanaged countryside. Sometimes none of it is enclosed or managed and the movements of the herd are controlled by ranchers directing the leaders.

The smallest ranches will typically have a minimum of 20 square kilometres holding around 400 animals at various stages in the life cycle. There would be about 10 people involved in running this sort of farm and it would have an annual turnover in the region of 200,000 credits. see this article on the economics of megadon ranching for more details.

Megadon Life Cycle

Megadons hatch from eggs and are about the size of a domestic cat when they emerge. Like many animals hatching from eggs they associate the first things they see as 'parents'. This is one of the factors that makes ranching significantly safer and more lucrative than simply hunting wild megadon herds. A feature of ranching is that at least one of those in contact with hatchlings will be in a suit of brightly coloured high mobility armour. This is continued with the growing megadons who will follow the lead of the brightly coloured armoured rancher, thus making herding much easier.

They grow rapidly (about 3kg/day) if fed on a protein rich diet of plants. By the time they are one year old they can be about twice the size of a beef cow, about a tonne. This rate of growth then increases to about 6kg/day) for approximately four years before slowing again to around 3kg/day. At the age of five a typical megadon weighs in at 20 tonnes and is around 15 metres from nose to tail.

— James Kemp 29 Aug 2007 00:12

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