



Ten Tips to More Profitable Feedlot Operation

1 Prevent/Reduce Sickness in Receiving Cattle Be prepared before cattle arrive at the feedlot! The first 42 days are the most critical time in the feedlot. Once cattle become sick, performance is reduced for the entire feeding period. Cattle require high nutrient density diets to compensate for reduced feed intake. Preventative antibiotic therapy has been shown to reduce mortality. Many cattle are not "bunk-broke" and will not eat. Help cattle find the feed by starting with hay hanging out of the bunk, into the pen and set the waterer to overflow so cattle can find water. Check for sick cattle after feeding. Pull and treat sick cattle immediately.

2 Improve Bunk Management Cattle feeders often fail to realize the importance of proper feed and bunk management. The goal is to maintain consistent feed intake every day to maximize rumen fermentation. Three or four small meals are preferable to large meals once or twice per day. Read bunks at the same time and in the same order every day. Make changes in the amount of feed gradually. Increases (or decreases) in feed should usually be in the range of 1-4%. It is better to slightly under-feed cattle, rather than over-feed. Cattle that over-eat may develop acidosis, ruminitis, liver abscesses, and have poorer performance with less profit than cattle fed properly. Don't increase the feed call on two consecutive days. Wait to see how cattle adjust for a few days before making any additional changes. Inexperienced cattle feeders chase the cattle, moving feed up and down constantly. Let the cattle be your guide. Make increases when 50-55% of the cattle are waiting at the bunk at feeding time, decrease if 20% or less are at the bunk. Stay ahead of the cattle and you will be rewarded with fewer feedlot disorders, better feed conversion and a lower cost of gain.

3 Clean/Replace Automatic Waterers Cattle need to consume about 5-12 lbs of water for every lb of dry feed consumed. Without adequate amounts of clean, cool, fresh water, cattle reduce feed consumption and performance declines. Of all nutrients, water is the least expensive and the most often over-looked. Install automatic waterers that are easy to clean, open trough design, inexpensive to maintain, will not

freeze, and durable. The poorest waterers are the large tanks with enclosed tops and floating balls. Stick your hand down into one of these waterers... feels like a septic tank? Would you drink this water? How do you think cattle like drinking it? Replace "septic tanks" with open trough, clean water and see what a difference it makes in feed intake, and performance.

4 Improve Ventilation Bacteria that cause pneumonia travel through the air on tiny water droplets. Ammonia and other manure gasses cause irritation of eyes and lungs. Constant challenges brought by poor air quality can be reduced or eliminated through one simple step: improve ventilation! Obviously, this does not apply if the cattle are in an open lot, but if the cattle have a barn or shed for housing, many improvements can be made economically. Open the roof ridge. Ideally, 16-18 inches of open ridge peak is needed to exhaust gasses from growing/finishing cattle. The "chimney effect" of the ridge will keep most rain from falling into the building. Buildings should be open to the south and/or south-east. Replace the upper 1/2 of the north and west walls with "Yorkshire Boarding" - 1" x 4" boards, vertically installed with a 1" gap between each board. This will cut wind, prevent drafts, and provide maintenance-free, self-adjusting ventilation.

5 Keep Cattle Out of Mud Feed intake is reduced and maintenance energy increased when cattle are in mud. Mud causes hair to become wet and caked with mud. This reduces the insulating quality of the hair and increases the loss of body heat. Cattle performance and profitability is reduced when heat loss increases and feed intake decreases. Pens should have a slope of 2-3% to allow excess water to drain, but prevent water run-off to carry mud and manure into surface waters. In areas where soils retain water and make mud, consider using concrete-like FGD (flue-gas desulfurization) waste to pave cattle pens. This material is a by-product of coal-burning electrical power plants and has been used as cattle feedlot pen floors since the early 1990s, when the use of FGD waste gained approval for feedlot use from the Ohio EPA.

From the code of the old west:

When you get to where you're goin', the first thing to do is take care of the horse you rode in on.

6 Provide Wind Protection Like mud, wind can adversely affect cattle performance. Extreme cold temperatures increase feed intake, but can reduce performance. Now, add wind chill to muddy cattle and performance really suffers. How do feedlots cope with cold and wind in cold climates? They provide wind protection. The best wind control is a "Z"-shaped or "W" shaped fence (when viewed from above) made of 1" x 4" boards installed vertically with a 1" gap between boards. The fence should be 10' tall and will provide protection for cattle regardless of wind direction or speed. Improved performance pays for wind protection.

7 Mix Feed Properly Feed mixers mix ingredients together, then, as the mixer continues to run, feed ingredients tend to separate, mix back together, and then separate in a cycle. Because of this cycling effect, the length of time feed is mixed is critical to the quality of feed being manufactured. The order in which ingredients are added to feed mixing equipment (truck, mixer, proportioning equipment) has a profound effect on how well the ingredients mix together and the quality of feed delivered to the cattle in the bunk. With no-roughage products, whole shelled corn should be put into the mixer first. Next, Supplement pellets should be added. Mix for one or two minutes only (to mix pellets and corn), then feed should be discharged. The goal is to mix the ingredients, but minimize fines in the finished feed. Feeds based on silage, hay, or other roughages should be mixed by adding the roughage, then grain, by-products (if being fed), then supplement pellets. Feed may need to be mixed for 3-6 minutes depending on the type of mixer to fully mix these ingredients. With base-mixes, the best order is usually silage, base-mix, by-products (if being fed), then grain. Again, mixing may need to be for 3-6 minutes depending on the type of mixer to fully mix these ingredients. Cattle eat at the same place (within 3 feet) of the feed bunk every day. Consider a silage-based diet that is improperly mixed. If the silage portion discharges first and the grain discharges last, cattle at the beginning of the bunk are being fed a ration which is mostly silage, while cattle eating at the end of the bunk are consuming a diet which is mostly grain. Poor growth occurs at both ends of the bunk - a high-roughage (low energy) diet for cattle at one end, and acidosis in cattle at the other end of the bunk. Uniform feed mixing would solve the problem and deliver a consistent, balanced diet to all cattle in the pen.

8 Deliver Feed Properly Once feed has been properly mixed, it needs to be delivered to the cattle. For optimum performance, divide daily feed allocation into three or four separate feedings. Feed 10-15% of the daily feed on the first cover (7-9 a.m.) and 20-25% on the second cover (9-11 a.m.). Split the remaining feed about equally during the afternoon feedings (1-3 p.m., and 3-5 p.m.), but remember, the later in the day the last feed is delivered, the better for the cattle. This system does not change the total amount of feed that must be delivered in a day, only the times feed is

delivered. Using this system, all cattle should be fed their first cover by 9:00 a.m. every day. Feed newly arrived receiving cattle first, followed by cattle on finishing diets and finally, feed cattle on growing diets. Use the same order for feed delivery on each round. Make sure cattle are fed at the same times every day - including weekends.

9 Manage Risk The three things needed to make money feeding cattle are to: "Buy them right; Feed them right; and Sell them right". These are the risks of cattle feeding and successful cattlemen manage these risks. The greatest risk is the fed cattle market. Market crashes cause cattlemen to go to bed millionaires and wake up bums! Manage this risk with hedging or contracting. Performance risks depend on the health, death loss, type of cattle, season of the year, and weather. Projected performance of the cattle is based on previous experience with similar cattle fed under similar conditions, plus some allowance for error. Finally, risks associated with input costs (feed, medication, cattle) need to be managed. Contracting or hedging feed and other inputs protects against cost increases. The amount you are willing to pay for cattle must be based on the futures market and projected cost of production. Often cattlemen buy cattle based on emotion - even when economics project a loss. Sometimes, the best use of a feedlot is to leave it empty and wait until prices adjust to a projected profit instead of filling pens with cattle that will lose money.

10 Use the BABY DOLL Program No other feed program has the BABY DOLL advantages! We start with consistent quality. We use fixed formulas - no least-cost formulation. All products are designed for optimum performance with high levels of critical nutrients and based on years of ongoing research and development. BABY DOLL products exclusively use *Poly-Plex™* organic trace minerals for zinc, copper, manganese and iron to enhance immune system function and animal performance. These are the most bioavailable forms of these minerals. You will never see inferior, low bioavailable forms (oxides or sulfates) of these minerals in BABY DOLL feed products. We formulate with high levels of vitamins A, D₃ and E, and we use premium ingredients like distillers dried grains, fish meal, and alfalfa meal to provide proper nutrients and improve digestibility and palatability. When you read our feed tags, you'll see each ingredient listed in the order of inclusion in the formula and you'll find that we guarantee the levels of vitamins and minerals well beyond the AAFCO regulations. Beyond an excellent feed program, The BABY DOLL Program offers technical advice and service unmatched by other feed companies. The beef business is our only business. We continue to improve the BABY DOLL Program through research and a dedication to our customer's needs. That's why the BABY DOLL Program is the Way to Grow...Quality Beef!