ANIMAL HEALTH CLINIC NEWSLETTER

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Facility Design and Maintenance

Processing Areas. Cattle handling facilities should allow for easy cattle flow from dark into light. They should be at least roofed, if not totally enclosed if possible, and laid out so cattle move away from activity and noise. A crowd tub or Bud box with a snake alley, single or double, that is open-sided on the outside with at least 12' of single straight run prior to the chute is advised. The working chute should be hydraulic and equipped with load cells. The facility should be kept as clean as possible and freshly cleaned prior to processing newly arrived cattle.

Receiving Pens. If your facility has specific pens for receiving and/or starting cattle they should be laid out so they are convenient to the processing area. They should have enough bunk space so every animal can eat at the same time. It's better if they're wider than they are deep keeping cattle close to feed and water, and it also makes observation easier. Water should be centrally located and have the ability to run non-stop so cattle can hear, see and smell it.

Feeding Pens. Depending on your geographic location, the square footage should match your worst possible environmental conditions. In eastern Nebraska that means between 400 and 500 sq. ft. per head, but in the High Plains, 300 sq. ft. might be adequate. Drainage and mounds with moderate slopes are essential. I prefer pens that are deeper than they are wide, making it easier to identify non-eaters and sick cattle. I'm also a strong advocate of north to south bunk lines, so cattle eat facing east or west and avoid most direct winds in their face.

Maintenance. Head cables and neck rails seem to be two of the biggest maintenance issues in feedlots. I prefer pipe rails to cable, but they should be sleeved so they give without breaking welds or bending out of shape. If cable is used, it must be kept tight enough to allow rubbing without getting sloppy loose. Gates and fences would be next on the list.

Gates are often too light, hung on too small a post or have poorly designed latches. Fences come in all types and varieties and will need welding, tightening or splicing. If you use electrified wire, go for the spliceless type as butt welds contract and expand at a different rate than the wire and will break more easily and more often.

Bunks and Waterers. Bunks without crap steps get manure and mud in them and must be cleaned. Those on risers get mud, manure and feed underneath them and harbor insects and rodents. Either clean them regularly or do away with the risers by pouring a continuous stop. Individual bunk sections compared to slip-formed bunks get out of alignment and leak feed. It also looks bad in a commercial setting to a prospective client. Waterers often have float and valve problems that need to be addressed within two days of creating a mud hole. Waterers must be cleaned at least weekly.

Daily Operation

Cattle typically arrive at the facility deficient in protein, energy, minerals and need rehydration. Here are some considerations for what they need upon arrival or soon after.

Time. If possible, cattle should be processed (vaccinated, wormed, poured, tagged) following a rest of one-half day for each 300 miles of transit. If pulls occur prior to the programmed time, respond accordingly. Long-haul cattle are better served with one to two days of rest to reduce stress. Patience and quietness are important virtues.

Feed. Newly arrived cattle should have fresh feed waiting for them when they are penned or be fed immediately after. Palatability and freshness are critical to getting a good start. Avoid high levels of ensiled feedstuffs, urea and animal protein sources as they are acquired tastes that many cattle will not have at arrival. All-natural/all-vegetable supplements work best or at least minimize the nonprotein nitrogen (NPN). Vitamin and trace mineral levels need to be elevated to help stimulate the immune system. A taste enhancer such as alfalfa or molasses often helps cattle start eating. Prebiotics/probiotics, yeast, yucca or other metabolites could also be beneficial. Offer 1 lb. of a fed ration per cwt of animal and refeed according to appetite. If you favor grass hay, spread it on top of the ration for one to three feedings and underneath for one to two more, if necessary.

Water. Fresh, clean water is the most important nutrient we offer cattle. Water should always be available. Clorox bleach is an excellent disinfectant for cleaning water tanks and also limits algae and slime growth in high mineral areas. If cattle are suspected to have never seen a water tank before, tie up the float and let the tank overflow for a while to make sure they can find water.

Space. Receiving pens should not be overly spacious. We don't want cattle to wander too far from feed and water. Twenty-four inches of bunk space is desirable, so all cattle can eat at once.

Environment. Receiving/starting pens should be as clean as possible. The bunks and waterers should be freshly cleaned. If receiving on concrete, the use of straw, wood chips or crop residue on part of the surface (especially in cold or damp weather) might also be an advantage.

Processing

Vaccinations. A sound health program set up by a veterinarian should be in place. If possible, all injectable products should be given subcutaneously and if not they must be in the neck well forward of the shoulders. Care must be taken to use clean, sharp needles of the proper gauge and length. Implanting and boostering should be performed 21 days to 28 days later. By delaying the implant we lessen stress and might save implant dollars. Mass medication is strongly discouraged.

Implants. The program used needs to match the cattle management and the marketing scheme. Potential products and timing include:

- **Ralgro**
  - 30 to 60 days
- **Revalor S, H; Component TES, TEH**
  - 70 to 110 days
- **Compudose**
  - 150 to 220 days
- **Encore** *(2x Compudose)*
  - 150 to 220 days
- **Revalor IS, IH; Component TESI, TEHI**
  - 70 to 110 days
- **Revalor XS, XH**
  - 140 to 200 days
- **Revalor G**
  - 70 to 110 days

Procedure. Evaluate cattle based on sex, weight, frame score and body condition. Use these evaluation criteria to establish an out-weight objective and calculate days needed to reach it. Add 10 to 14 days to allow for a weather and marketing sway factor, then use this day total to plan backward to select the product or products you will use.

Ration Management

Philosophy. On yearling cattle and big calves, we generally use a five-step program to get cattle to the final ration. On lighter calves, we might insert some grower steps, program feed or even limit feed based on our objectives. Rations are designed to make smooth transitions of both energy density and moisture content.

- **5 Step Grower**
- **1-50 NEg** 1-50 NEg
- **2-55 NEg** 11-46 NEg
- **3-60 NEg** 12-49 NEg
- **4-64 NEg** 13-52 NEg
- **5-67 NEg** 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ration design, when possible, will move no more than 5 points net energy gain (NEg) and 5 points moisture as we transition from ration to ration.

Feedstuffs. Ration ingredients can be categorized several ways, as protein, energy, roughage or filler sources. Some feedstuffs may fall into more than one category such as distillers grains or alfalfa hay.

Feed Processing. Particle size, texture and aroma all play important roles in ration acceptance. Grains need to be processed to improve starch digestion by opening the kernels' hard outer shell. Roughages need to provide rumen stimulation or scratch. Don't harvest them so wet that they are mush or so dry that they can be processed into flour.

Loading and Delivery. Loading feedstuffs into the delivery device needs to account for the physical setup of the feed preparation area and how various feedstuffs handle and mix. Don't overfill the feed delivery box and don't under- or over-mix. Mixer manufacturers can give advice on how long and what RPMs to use to get the best mix. Our objective is to make each mouthful the same. Proper care of equipment is also vital.

In a nutshell, a good plan poorly executed is no longer a good plan.

Small Animal Corner for the Month of May:

Now's the time to put your pet on a flea and tick prevention regimen. Lyme disease is a concern in the area. It is transmitted by the tiny deer tick. Heartworm prevent (if not give year-round) can be started after a negative heartworm check has been performed at the clinic. A small blood sample is required.

May is National Pet Month
May 3-9: National Pet week