



INTAKE MANAGEMENT IN FEEDLOT OPERATIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

Intake management plays a key role in optimizing the performance of cattle in feedlot operations. Whether it's maximizing feed efficiency or ensuring consistent gains, adhering to effective intake management practices can significantly impact overall profitability. Here's a breakdown of key points to consider:

Understanding the Rumen:

The rumen, a complex fermentation system, thrives on consistency. Drastic changes can disrupt its delicate balance, leading to inefficiencies in feed utilization. It's crucial to maintain a stable environment to promote optimal rumen function.

Importance of Consistency:

Feed efficiency isn't solely determined by large intakes but rather by maintaining consistency in feed quality and delivery. Matching feed intakes to the capacity of the cattle is a cost-effective strategy that influences various factors including feed efficiency, gain, morbidity, mortality, and cost of gain.

Factors Affecting Intake:

Negatives such as weather changes, poor pen conditions, inconsistent feed quality, and health issues can adversely impact intake management. Conversely, positives like good pen design, feedstuffs, diets, and health protocols contribute to efficient intake management.

Bunk Management Strategies:

Effective bunk management hinges on factors like consistent ingredients, adequate fiber, and avoiding overly aggressive feed moves. Following an intake curve for incoming cattle prevents overfeeding during the initial days on feed, which can be detrimental.

Daily Routine and Observation:

Consistency is key in feed delivery and bunk management. Establishing a routine for feeding times and observing bunk conditions at the same time each day helps in maintaining optimal intake levels.



Managing Bunk Conditions:

Strive for a consistent bunk condition, such as a crumb texture, as an indicator of proper intake. Make gradual adjustments in feed amounts (0.5 lb DM) and avoid simultaneous increases in both DM and energy.

Monitoring Cattle Health and Behavior:

Regularly observe cattle demeanor and stool characteristics as indicators of health and response to feed. Historical intake data can guide adjustments, and any significant deviations should be addressed cautiously.

Pen Management Integration:

Bunk management is closely intertwined with pen management. Pay attention to signs of impeded movement within pens, as this can affect intake levels.

Feeding Frequency:

Feed as frequently as possible while maintaining consistency in schedule. Multiple feedings per day, including short-split feeding, can ensure all cattle receive a mixed diet and allow for prompt adjustments based on cattle response.

Conclusion:

Mastering intake management in feedlot operations requires a comprehensive approach that considers various factors influencing feed efficiency, cattle health, and overall performance. By implementing consistent bunk management strategies, observing cattle behavior, and integrating effective pen management practices, feedlot operators can optimize intake levels, leading to improved profitability and animal performance.

By adhering to these principles, feedlot operators can optimize intake levels, leading to improved profitability and animal performance in their operations.