



Manage a Feedlot

Handout 9

Feeding Guidelines

Feeding Guidelines

Feeding Guidelines for Beef Cows

Body condition scoring of beef cows is a scientifically approved method to assess nutritional status. Body condition scores (BCS) range from 1 (emaciated) to 9 (obese).

- A BCS of 4-6 is most desirable for health and production. A BCS of 2 or under is not acceptable and immediate corrective action should be taken.
- During periods of prolonged drought and widespread shortages of hay and other feedstuffs, the average BCS of cows within a herd may temporarily decline. This is not desirable, but may be outside **the cattle owner's control until drought relief is achieved.**
- During periods of decreasing temperature, feeding plans should reflect increased energy needs.

Feeding Guidelines for Stocker Cattle

- Stockers are raised on a wide variety of forages (native pasture, annuals, improved pasture) with minimal additional nutrient supplementation.
- On growing forages, stocking rates should be established that meet production goals for growth and performance.
- On dormant pastures, supplement cattle as needed to meet maintenance or growth **requirements for the animal's weight, breed, and age as established by NRC guidelines and targeted production goals of the operation.**

Feeding Guidelines for Feeder Cattle

Feed yard cattle can eat diverse diets, but the typical ration contains a high proportion of grain(s) (corn, milo, barley, grain by-products) and a smaller proportion of roughages (hay, straw, silage, hulls, etc.). The NRC lists the dietary requirements of beef cattle (based on weight, weather, frame score, etc.) and the feeding value of various commodities included in the diet.

- Consult a nutritionist (private consultant, university or feed company employee) for advice on ration formulation and feeding programs.
- Avoid sudden changes in ration composition or amount **of ration offered.** • **Monitor changes** in weight gain, faeces, incidence of digestive upsets (acidosis or bloat) and foot health to help evaluate the feeding program.
- A small percentage of cattle in feed yards develop laminitis or founder. Mild cases do not affect animal welfare or performance; however, hooves that are double their normal length compromise movement. In these instances, the individual animal should be provided appropriate care and marketed as soon as possible.