

Best Practice of Handling CATTLE FEEDLOT



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Finishing cattle in feedlots brings a series of advantages to the beef production chain, contributing to a regular supply of finished animals throughout the year, and reducing the pressure on pasture during the dry season and the slaughter age. However, the feedlot environment can be very challenging for cattle, mainly when they are kept under raising and handling conditions that do not take into account their needs and adaptation capacities, which generate severe and long term stress. Such conditions lead cattle to face serious welfare problems, thereby hampering their performance. The purpose of this summary is to present recommendations for good handling practices that have the potential to minimize the risk of failures in beef cattle adaptation to feedlot environment, and to avoid situations that result in suffering. By adopting these recommendations, it is expected to promote cattle welfare, facilitate the work of employees and improve producer profitability.



Best Practices of Handling – Cattle Feedlot - Step-by-step

1. Cattle are grazer animals adapted to live in typical conditions of pasture environments and, therefore, they may face difficulties when kept in feedlot environment.
2. Adopt raising and handling practices that facilitate the cattle adaptation to the feedlot environment.
3. Unload the animals as soon as possible. Keep calm, do not scream, hit or use the electric prod to unload them.
4. Avoid processing cattle immediately after unloading them! Give the animals the opportunity to recover from transportation, installing them provisionally in a pasture or feedlot pen, with free access to roughage diet and good quality water. Consider a recovery period between 12 and 24 hours for animals transported for up to 6 hours. For longer trips, extend the period of recovery keeping it between 24 and 48 hours.
5. Accommodate a maximum of 150 heads of cattle per feedlot pen.
6. Keep the animals on pastures for 10 to 15 days, so that the animals become familiar with each other and the social hierarchy is formed. Take the opportunity to adapt the animals to the feedlot diet, providing them access to the starter ration.
7. Fill in the holes and collect stones and other materials that may be on the floor of the feedlot pens.
8. Before starting to drive cattle to feedlot pens, make sure that all paths are free of obstacles and that all animals are in good health.
9. Drive sick/injured animals to the hospital pen, where they must be supervised by a veterinarian..
10. Drive the animals calmly to the feedlot pens; no screaming.
11. After accommodating the animals in the feedlot pens, start monitoring their behavior and general conditions. Conduct the follow-up visits periodically, with great attention and care. Monitor the pens twice a day during the first two weeks, reducing the frequency to a daily visit from the third week on.
12. Animals showing signs of difficulties in adaptation for a period exceeding three days should be withdrawn from the feedlot pen and driven to the hospital pen, where they must receive special attention and veterinary care, when necessary.
13. Clean the feed bunk daily and the water troughs at least twice a week.
14. Make sure all animals have easy access to the feed bunk and water troughs at any time of the day during the feedlot period. Control cattle intake by scoring the feed bunk before delivering the first meal of the day. At same time, do manure evaluation.
15. Repair the floor of the feedlot pens systematically, pay special attention to the most susceptible areas for mud formation, especially in areas near the feed bunks and water troughs.
16. Make sure the drainage system is working well and clean the feedlot pens regularly.
17. The fences must always be well maintained and stretched.
18. Use an irrigation system to control dust during the dry season. Turn on the irrigation systems always when air moisture is low, the pen floor is dry, and the animals show greater activity.
19. Provide enough shade for all animals to use at the same time anytime of the day.

