

Promoting Well-Being in the Feedlot Setting

Tips to keep cattle healthy and gaining during critical growth periods. Reducing disease and stress is critical for high-performing cattle in a feedlot. Transitions, processing, weather and the onset of disease can cause higher levels of stress, which can be mitigated with proper stockmanship, d acclimation plans and ideal facility design.

Acclimation to a New Location

Transporting cattle to the feedlot for the next phase of production can be a stress-provoking event as they may have been transported through an auction market and experienced changes in weather, feed and handling. Limiting commingling during the arrival period can help reduce stress and disease pressure and decrease mortality during your cattle's first two weeks on the feedlot.¹ To help cattle properly settle and acclimate to their new location and the novelty of their new environment:

- Ensure the water source is easy to find.¹ Water is a critical nutrient for cattle in a feedlot, and water accessibility is of utmost importance. One inch of linear water space per head is recommended for optimal space.²
- As the cattle get acclimated to the new pen and bunk area, 18 inches of bunk space per head is recommended. 12 inches per head is the minimum expectation after the acclimation period to reduce competition among the animals.²
- Ensure the facility is designed to promote animal movement without disrupting their natural behaviour.



Daily Management

Stress can contribute to signs of illness or incidence of disease.¹ Each pen should be checked routinely for signs of illness, cardinal signs of stress and early signs of disease, and treatment should be determined as soon as possible. Monitoring both physical and behavioural symptoms and changes as well as clinical signs of illness is essential so that cattle can be treated appropriately.

Supporting cattle well-being starts with routine pen checks. Ensuring your cattle get up and move around each day is critical to their well-being. By making slow, calm movements, you can see each animal and check for signs of illness, while ensuring the cattle get exercise each day.¹ You and your feedlot personnel should employ proper stockmanship techniques for daily checks to lower stress in the pens. Avoid yelling, running, jumping and sudden movements when interacting with cattle to minimize stress.

Animal well-being is a crucial priority in a feedlot. A keen focus on acclimation, proper stockmanship and consistent maintenance can all help you reduce stress and promote healthier cattle.

Sources:

¹ Government of Alberta. (n.d.). Recognizing and Reducing Stress in Feedlot Cattle. [https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef3988/\\$FILE/Reducing_Stress_Feedlot.pdf](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/beef3988/$FILE/Reducing_Stress_Feedlot.pdf)

² Armstrong, J. (2023). 10 Things to Improve Feedlot Performance. University of Minnesota Beef Extension. <https://extension.umn.edu/beef-feedlot/10-things-improve-feedlot-performance>