

Need Proper Feedlot Management

Proper care and treatment of newly-arrived calves in the feedlot is a part of good feedlot management, said Vern Meyer, Iowa State University extension agricultural engineer.

If good facilities are not available for handling these calves, treatment may not get done as soon as it should or perhaps not at all. The loss of one calf at today's prices would pay for a good part of handling facilities, said Vern Meyer.

The minimum facilities needed are a working chute, a crowding pen leading into the working chute, a holding pen to hold the cattle before working, and one or more pens for them after working.

For calves, it is advisable to have the working chute under a roof and perhaps even in part of a barn. In addition, there should be a convalescent pen into which the calves that are treated can be placed until they have fully recovered.

"Taking a treated calf right back into the regular pen puts the animal at a serious disadvantage. He's back on the bottom of the totem pole and the first thing you know, he's back at the hospital," Meyer said.

When planning handling facilities for calves, keep in mind the animal's natural behavioral habits and basic physiological characteristics. Cattle have an inborn instinct to follow each other, and they are easily group-motivated by fear. They possess a keen sense of hearing, better than that of humans, and they fear noise, particularly high pitched sounds.

Cattle have a very wide angle of vision which gives them almost 360 degrees vision without turning their heads. They have very poor depth perception in their vision. They are basically color-blind and can distinguish only black and white. They fear and shy away from shadowy, high contrast or zebra-striped areas. These might be created by shade and bright areas, painted strips, drain grills, gate guards or something similar.

Cattle will follow curved paths more readily than a straight line. Capitalize on this characteristic when designing chutes and working alleys. Try to keep cattle tracking movement one way as much as possible or in a circle. Design crowding and holding pens without square corners.

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Use solid sides on single-file chutes if possible to prevent calves from being spooked by outside attractions. Always use a see-through gate for a single-file working chute so waiting calves can see an escape route ahead of them.

In the holding pen, allow about 14 square feet for each calf, while in the crowding pen, allow about 6 square feet per head. A desirable working chute width for calves is 18 inches, but if this is to be used for other cattle as well it should be 24 inches wide. A chute with sloping sides works better for different size cattle but is more difficult to construct. It should be 15 inches wide at the bottom and 24 inches at the top.

A headgate is the minimum restraint needed to hold the calves, but

for more positive control, you might want to consider a squeeze chute. If you use a headgate, select one that is rugged and has a positive quick-closing and opening action. Avoid one with a lever that might injure the operator when releasing an animal.

Select a fairly level area for the crowding pen to prevent the animals from crowding to the higher side. Provide a rough finish on all concrete to insure stable footing. One way to roughen the floors is to score the concrete with one-inch-wide, one-half-inch deep grooves on a six-inch-square grid to prevent slippage.

A well designed calf handling facility can reduce handling time and operator requirements, increase operator safety, and minimize animal injury and stress during medicating, branding and handling operations. ☑

Iowa Auxiliary Elects Officers

The Iowa Angus Auxiliary met recently in Des Moines for their annual meeting. New officers elected for 1979 are: president, Mrs. Gene (Ardeth) Maas, Casey; president-elect, Mrs. Roger (Joan) Hall, Malcom; and secretary-treasurer, Mrs. Robert (Marilyn) Schultz, Columbus Junction.

The 1979 goals of the Iowa Angus Auxiliary are to stress beef education and to encourage young Angus breeders to continue their work with Angus cattle. The last goal is accomplished by awarding three scholarships to graduating high school seniors and through various other award programs. ☑