

Travel With Care



Plan ahead when traveling to summer shows.

by *Corinne Patterson*

Traveling to the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) has long been a favorite pastime for many Angus juniors and their families. The anticipation of a class winner or a first place in the speech contest floats through the air surrounding the caravan across many long, hot miles to the annual summer event. But just as important as it is to get the speeches ready and quiz bowl teams assigned, the cattle require extra care while traveling.

Twig Marston, Extension beef cattle specialist at Kansas State University (K-State), says the biggest problem show travelers may face is getting their cattle back on feed and water once they have arrived at the show destination.

“A lot of times, the cattle get there and they won’t like the smell, the taste or something about the water, and they refuse to drink. If they don’t drink, lots of times, they don’t eat either.

“In the old days they used to take cream cans and bring the water with them so that they had the water from home. But you

don’t see that very often anymore,” Marston says. “Now people either filter the water to take out any of the impurities that might give it an off-flavor or -smell. The other thing you can do is mask it with a little bit of cherry Kool-Aid.®” A filter that attaches to a garden hose can provide fresh, filtered water.

One of the problems Marston sees with show heifers is that at home they drink out of a tank or a waterer, but they have to drink out of a bucket while at the show. Train them to drink out of a bucket before you leave home, he says.

Feed and water are the most important elements to keeping livestock healthy. Marston recommends restricting feed to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the normal ration a feeding or two prior to putting the cattle in the trailer. Once at the show site, feed them about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of their normal portion the first feeding, and then gradually increase that up to a full feeding. Allow the cattle to have plenty of grass hay so they get their fill.

“Grass hay, particularly, is slower to digest and has a slower passage rate than things like

grains or high-quality forages, so it will stick with them longer,” he says.

One product that may be handy to have on hand is a probiotic. “That’s a direct-feed microbial. If you’ve got an animal that kind of turns its nose up at its feed pan and doesn’t want to eat, give it a little of these probiotics, and the bugs stick in its rumen to get the microflora stimulated and going again,” Marston says.

Travel comfort

Comfort while traveling is important as well.

“Before you leave home, make sure your trailer is comfortable, with plenty of bedding in it,” Marston says. Whether using bark, straw or sand for the cattle to stand on while in the trailer, you want them to be comfortable. He also points out that ventilation is important in the summer when temperatures can creep beyond the high 90s.

Traveling in the evening, or the cooler part of the day, can help minimize stress and shrink, Marston says. A 24-hour span is the longest he recommends traveling without a rest stop. Cattle can gain shrink back within 48 hours after this length of travel. He says the point of stopping is to let the cattle rest. So, don’t fuss with walking them at this point. Feed and water them, and wait for the signs.

“The cattle will tell you when they are done resting, because they will get up and start moving around and stretch. Cattle get off the trailer and they kind of run and jump and stretch their muscles, and then they lay around for a while,” Marston says. “Once they get up that next time, that’s a signal that they’ve rested and that they feel pretty good about themselves.”

