



# Start with the End Goal in Mind

A balanced nutrition program for show cattle is all about results.

by Kayla Jentz, Filament Marketing

**W**hether you just started with show cattle or have been showing for years, you know how important it is to have a nutrition program that will help make your animals look their best. You want an animal to look great throughout the year, but even more important is being at their best at a future date — show day. Regardless of how many show dates you're targeting, your animal's nutrition program needs to be developed with the end goal in mind.

"We need to be thinking about the results we want," says Chad Zehnder, cattle consultant for Purina Animal Nutrition LLC. "What does the steer weigh currently? What do we want him to weigh on show day? With heifers it's not much different, but you may have multiple target dates to keep in mind."

Zehnder recommends a multi-step approach for developing a nutrition program.

## 1 Determine current nutrition

Whether the animal is purchased or home-raised, you need to know exactly what feed they've been getting and how much they were getting to smoothly transition those cattle to a more individualized show nutrition program.

If cattle haven't been on much feed, or if they're newly weaned, you can transition them to a sound starter program for 21-28 days, prior to starting them on their show feed program.

## 2 Build a balanced program

"Not every animal is going to have the same program," says Zehnder. "For instance, a steer in good condition, on the heavier side, might need 2 pounds of gain per day, but a smaller, lighter steer might need a program with higher energy to gain 3 pounds per day."

No matter the animal, any show nutrition program should include a balanced feed with adequate amounts of protein, energy, and fiber or roughage. It's also key to make sure that the animal has an adequate amount of mineral and vitamin supplementation, and that nutrients are from quality sources.

## 3 Consider palatability, water intake

Zehnder emphasizes the importance of highly palatable feeds and access to clean, fresh water.

"We need to be able to keep cattle on feed consistently, whether that's at home or at the show. You can have the best feeding program in the world, but if your animals won't eat it, it's not doing you any good," says Zehnder. "Palatability is a must have in a nutrition program."

"We also can't underestimate the importance of water. Water drives intake, so we need to make sure calves have access to clean, fresh water," adds Zehnder.

## 4 Avoid taking drastic measures

While a feeding program can be developed on paper, it is of critical importance to

monitor the appearance of your animal on a regular basis.

"Condition and weight should be monitored at least monthly when you're more than three months away from the show, and as you close in on your show date we need to be monitoring appearance and weights on a biweekly or weekly basis," says Zehnder. "We need to know how much those animals are actually gaining, so we can adjust their feed program accordingly without having to take drastic measures."

It takes approximately 45-60 days for nutrition to make a true change in appearance on an animal, according to Zehnder. He adds that if you're trying to make a change in less than 30 days, it will be a struggle.

Zehnder encourages cattle exhibitors to evaluate their show nutrition program regularly, especially if you're not seeing the results you want in the showing. While creating or re-evaluating a program can be intimidating, the potential end results in the showing may be well worth your while.

For more information on show nutrition, visit [www.purinamills.com/show-feed/](http://www.purinamills.com/show-feed/) or join the online community of show enthusiasts at [www.facebook.com/HonorShowChow](http://www.facebook.com/HonorShowChow).



**Editor's Note:** Kayla Jentz is a media relations executive for Filament Marketing LLC.