

FEEDING BEEF CATTLE

The Land O'Lakes Beef Feeding Program is comprised of five to six rations designed to take cattle from start to finish. The products best suited for each phase depend on the feedstuffs available and the management skills of the producer. It is also important to understand that although many of our supplements are recommended at a 1.0 pound feeding rate, the exact amount required to meet the animal's nutrient requirements depend on the other feedstuffs being fed and the producer's management and implant programs. For the most accurate feeding recommendation, utilize the Beef Ration Balancer Program.

A typical feeding program includes the following phases or periods:

1. Starting/Receiving Phase

The starting/receiving period has the greatest impact upon both health and feed intake. Therefore, it should be considered the most important phase of any cattle feeding operation. It is not unusual for newly weaned, stressed calves to have morbidity (sickness) rates of 20%-25%. Many of these diseases can be prevented through proper receiving management and nutrition.

The **main objectives** of starting cattle are to:

1. **Optimize feed consumption and nutrient/drug intake.**
2. **Support the development of a strong immune system.**
3. **Optimize starting cattle performance in terms of ADG and feed efficiency.**
4. **Provide direct protection against disease which is related to stress, population density and co-mingling of cattle.**

The following key points will help achieve these objectives:

- Immediately after arrival, cattle should be placed in a pen with fresh, clean water and feed. If cattle have not been preconditioned, they may not readily drink from automatic waterers, so supplying a water tank temporarily may be very helpful. The calves also may not recognize a pelleted feed or grain mix. For this reason, feeding good quality long stemmed hay on the first day will help to entice these calves to the bunk. If calves have been preconditioned, the starting ration may be fed along with the hay.
- It is very important to get calves on feed quickly to help avoid sickness. Starting rations utilizing wet ingredients such as corn silage and haylage may result in cattle coming on feed very slowly.

Nutrient specifications of an ideal starting ration would be:

- A minimum of 75% dry matter
- 42 - 47 Mcal of net energy for gain
- 13 - 14% crude protein
- Low level of urea
- 0.8% calcium and 0.4% phosphorus
- 1.2% -1.4% potassium
- Highly fortified in vitamins and trace minerals

- The following are typical starting rations for a 550 pound calf:

	<u>Pounds As Fed</u>	
Shelled Corn	8.1	6.9
Grass Hay	7.3	----
Alfalfa or Grass/Legume Hay	----	9.4
Steak Maker Start-EM	----	1.0
Steak Maker 2X Start-EM	2.0	----

- When stepping cattle up on feed, do not increase the amount delivered by more than 0.5 pounds of dry matter per head. Once an increase is made, hold that level of intake for at least three days before increasing again.
- It is important to feed the starting ration until the animal's dry matter intake reaches 2.5% of their body weight before switching to the next ration.

2. Growing Phase

The growing phase is necessary in smaller framed animals to encourage frame growth, up to approximately 750 pounds, before they are placed on the finishing ration. If larger framed cattle are being fed, then this phase can be treated as another five-day transition ration.

- It is cost effective during the growing phase to introduce corn silage or wet corn gluten into the ration if these products are available.
- The growing ration should be:
 - 47 - 50 Mcal of Net Energy for Gain
 - 12 - 12.5% crude protein
- The following are typical growing rations for a 650 pound animal:

	<u>Pounds As Fed</u>		
Shelled Corn	12	6	12
Corn Silage	----	30	----
Grass/Legume Hay	6.5	----	6.25
Steak Maker Grower	1.0	----	----
Steak Maker Grower 1.75	----	1.75	----
Beef Grower 38	----	----	1.25

3. Transition Phases

The purpose of the transition diets are to gradually increase the Net Energy for Gain in the total ration. There will typically be three transition phases, each one lasting for approximately five days:

- 50 - 54 Mcal Net Energy for Gain ration
- 54 - 57 Mcal Net Energy for Gain ration
- 57 - 60 Mcal Net Energy for Gain ration

4. Finishing Phase

During the finishing phase, it is very important that intakes be closely monitored to prevent cattle from going off feed. Every one pound increase in average dry matter intake over the feeding period will mean an increase in average daily gain of 0.25 pounds.

- A typical finishing ration will be:
 - A minimum of 11% crude protein. Protein levels may be higher, depending on the producer's level of management and implant program.
 - 60 Mcal of Net Energy for Gain.
 - 0.5% Calcium and 0.35 % Phosphorus.
 - 0.6% Potassium. High grain rations typically require supplementation to reach 0.6%. Potassium functions to maintain dry matter intake in heavy cattle and improve average daily gain and feed efficiency.
- The following are typical finishing rations for a 900 pound animal.

	<u>Pounds As Fed</u>	
Shelled Corn	20	18
Grass/Legume Hay	2.0	----
Corn Silage	----	11.5
Steak Maker Finisher (K+)	1.0	----
Beef 40-20	----	1.0
Bos Builder S Mineral	----	.25