

The Latest Across the Plains

Unused Feed

“Don’t mistake arrogance for confidence. There is honor in being unheralded if you enjoy your work.”
– Rachel J. Lohof Larsen

What’s New in the Industry

Japan has increased its tariffs on US frozen beef imports while China has banned beef from 6 Australian packing plants.

GPLC, Inc. now has a Facebook page! Please “Like” us and check back often to see relevant information on issues we face in the cattle industry. www.facebook.com/gplcinc

Save Money \$\$\$ Test Your Feeds

Tests are relatively inexpensive, usually costing less than \$18, for the information derived. Contact our office to set up an appointment to have us pull feed samples if we have not done so yet.

We want to hear from you...

Do you have a question you would like one of the nutritionists to address in depth in our newsletter? Just submit your question through our website www.GPLC-Inc.com and we will get to work on it.

Timely Reminders

- ◆ Inoculate and cover silage/earlage piles
- ◆ Scrape pens and pile manure
- ◆ Clean water sources on a weekly basis
- ◆ Keep an eye on commodity contract prices the next two months
- ◆ Have us sample hay and silage (silage greater than 3 weeks after harvest)
- ◆ Start thinking about pre-weaning calf diets
- ◆ Consider the use of energy supplements and diets on cool season pasture grazing this fall to help boost gains since the value of gain is very high
- ◆ Contact your nutritionist about running projections on growing or finishing cattle, beef or Holstein, to help plan feedstuffs needs

Calendar of Events

- **Sept 8 - 17** Kansas State Fair, Hutchinson, KS
- **Sept 12 - 14** Big Iron Farm Show, West Fargo, ND
- **Sept 12 - 14** Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island, NE
- **Sept 14 - 24** Oklahoma State Fair, Oklahoma City, OK
- **Sept 20 - 21** Minnesota Nutrition Conference, Mankato, MN
- **Sept 22 - 23** Stockmanship and Stewardship Event, Fort Collins, CO
- **Sept 29 - Oct 22** Texas State Fair, Dallas, TX
- **Oct 6 - 8** Ozark Fall FarmFest, Springfield, MO
- **Oct 8 - 10** Texas Cattle Feeders Association Annual Convention, Amarillo, TX
- **Oct 12 - 22** Arkansas State Fair, Little Rock, AR
- **Oct 19 - 20** Animal Care and Handling Conference, Kansas City, MO
- **Oct 25 - 26** South Texas Farm & Ranch Show, Victoria, TX
- **Oct 27 - 28** Annual Kansas Cattlemen’s Association Convention and Tradeshow, Newton, KS



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Management Considerations for Weaning and Receiving Calves

By Jeremy Martin, Ph.D., Nutritionist

Managing the weaning and/or receiving process can be a challenge in a variety of situations. Over the last several years, continued drought has led to the early-weaning of calves across a wide cross-section of our territory. While there is no secret recipe, we as consultants and producers have learned a great deal, by trial and error, if no other way. Given these experiences, I felt it was a good idea to recap what has worked well in numerous situations.

First and foremost, understanding the kind of calves you are receiving is important. There is quite a difference in risk between fully preconditioned calves direct from a single well-managed ranch versus put-together fly-weights collected over the course of 2-3 days, in multiple sale barns and even more producers. From a health standpoint, we strongly encourage you to talk to your local veterinarian and customize a program for your operation and the kind of calves you deal with. If you are not currently using a veterinarian on a regular basis, or as a consulting vet – please do so. We would enjoy the opportunity to meet with your veterinarian regarding your weaning program so everyone involved has contributed to the goals and procedures employed at your operation. We feel a weaning and receiving program should include nutrition and health protocols including target intakes, injectable AND feed-grade antibiotic treatment protocols, and necropsy protocols.

Prior to calves arriving at your operation, make certain your feed inventory is fresh, pens are scraped clean, water tanks cleaned and disinfected, and bunk cables or rails are adjusted for the size of cattle you receive. As calves enter the pen, they should have immediate access to highly-palatable grass or prairie hay. Filling calves up for 12-24 hours on prairie hay equalizes the cattle so differences in fill due to removal from the dam and trucking are minimized. Essentially, it is intended to help ensure individual intakes are representative of the pen average from the first day on feed.

Aside from being highly palatable, receiving rations should be nutrient dense since intakes will likely be low during the first few days, particularly on bawling calves. Rations for incoming cattle should generally be 40% moisture or less, at least 14.5% crude protein, and 35 to 65% roughage on a dry matter basis. Fermented forages should be introduced slowly, after the calves are readily coming to the bunk. We recommend receiving cattle with high quality grass hay in the bunk, and top-dressing 0.5% - 1% of bodyweight (BW) on a dry-matter (DM) basis of the starter ration over the hay 12-24 hours later. Over the following days, increase intake of the calves carefully and consistently. Your goal should be to achieve an intake of 1.7-2% of BW on a

DM basis by day 7-10 depending on your program. Often times, days 3-5 are critical, in particular with bawling calves, as they suddenly rush the bunk wanting more feed. If the cattle have been slow consuming the starter ration and then a day comes when they are cleaned up in a few hours and wanting more feed, I recommend using 0.5%-1.0% BW of prairie hay in the afternoon to take the edge off of them. I prefer this method as compared to increasing the ration intake drastically over a 1-2 day period. In general, I prefer feed increases of no more than 0.25% BW on a DM basis (1.25 lb DM for a 500 lb calf). Passage rate is 48 hours so once you have raised intakes it takes two full days to realize the total affect; therefore, make sure the cattle clean up each increase for 2 days before increasing again.

I cannot stress enough that “reading the bunk” is a misnomer when starting calves, you must read the cattle. In most situations, between days 2 and 21 you should be “behind” the cattle, meaning they have their feed cleaned up 4-12 hours ahead of the next day’s feeding. As a result, they will aggressively approach the bunk at feeding time, which is exactly what you want as it makes identifying sick calves easy. But, if you are not reading the cattle, and by that I mean:

- gauging the aggressiveness with which they approach the bunk
- monitoring manure consistency, and
- noticing what time of day they clean up their feed

you will invariably get ahead of them. When you do get ahead of them, they often leave quite a bit of feed, and you may have to decrease intake quite drastically (25 to 50%) before they clean up what is offered. In my opinion, that scenario is when you are at the greatest risk of sickness. If you do get ahead of them, and follow them slowly down on intake, you may never get the daily feed intake that you would otherwise because you are slowly shrinking the stomach and teaching them to eat less feed.


In reality, everybody gets ahead of calves some time and knocks them off feed. At the first sign it has happened to a set of calves, I recommend cutting intake drastically in order to make the calves aggressive again. It is better not to “chase them down” on intake, but rather to get underneath them immediately. Do not be afraid to cut DM intake by 25% or more in order to do so.

Nutrition of highly-stressed calves is a topic of frequent discussion amongst the GPLC, Inc. nutritionists, and as a group we agree that a starter program benefits from addition of certain key ingredients. The starter supplements many of you use (i.e. E-Z Start, Right Start, High-Stress Balancer, etc.) contain a high proportion of their trace minerals from chelated sources, including chromium propionate at a dose proven to drive intake the first 30 days on feed, and may contain yeast products or direct-fed microbials designed to enhance energy utilization and/or gut health. All of these products add cost, but during the first 30 days on feed, we are focused on best cost, not least cost – and the two are absolutely not the same during this time period. On a per head basis, the additional cost of these ingredients amounts to



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approximately \$4-8 over the first 30 days. In other words, it represents far less than 1% of your investment in the cattle. We would be happy to share the research we use to make these decisions with you if you desire, but rest assured we have your return on investment in mind. 

Beef “Advocacy”: Is It Enough?

By Karl Harborth, Ph.D., Nutritionist

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines advocacy as *“the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.”* There is no doubt in my mind that every person involved in the beef industry is an advocate. Until recently, my idea of being a good advocate meant eating as much beef as I could, offering only beef to my house guests, posting facts about beef on social media, and wearing a Team Beef jersey while running a marathon. While I did encourage the consumption of beef, I was not doing my job as an advocate to stop the spread of negative perspective. Being involved in the beef industry my whole life has made it easy to look the other way when negative opinions are voiced against agriculture. As we let the anti-agricultural pundits tell our story the information they share is non-factual and is built to fit their agendas. Unfortunately, in our society when something is repeated enough times or enough people believe it then the information is perceived as “factual”. This is ironic as we live in the age of information and the sheer magnitude of information we have at our fingers tips compared to 10, 20, or 30 years ago is almost inconceivable. Sadly, with the exponential growth in technology, filters have not been created to prevent nonfactual information from being spread and the ease of disseminating incorrect information has increased.

I am not sure “advocacy” in a basic sense is the answer to this problem. I have learned through my own failures in what I considered to be “advocacy”, that my approach was inadequate to change the perception of most people. I have engaged in many conversations with people about the food choices they make in restaurants and at grocery stores. Unfortunately, I have failed miserably in these encounters as they were already locked into their opinion and all I did was aggravate the situation. The first mistake I made is plain and simple, I told the person their perception was wrong. I did not verbally speak those words, but when your face says “No, you’re wrong!” along with detailing numerous facts about hormone levels in beef compared to other foods, people tend to checkout from the conversation fairly quickly. I am plagued with wearing my thoughts on my face so I have to be very mindful of what my face is expressing to the individual when trying to relay my message. I am still an advocate by defini-

tion, but effectiveness is what I lack.

I, along with the employees of Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. have committed to becoming more effective beef advocates. In doing so we have to understand what we are up against and have a better understanding of the approach needed to be compelling. The anti-animal agricultural pundits have very deep pockets and very scary agendas which is typically the case when someone wants to do away with your livelihood. We can all sit in a room and talk facts, science, and other justifiable reasons for what and how we do things; however, to become better advocates for our industry we must do a better job of engaging consumers to tell our side of the story. One company training the GPLC, Inc. family participated in was led by Michele Payn, founder of Causematters.com. Michele did a great job of helping me understand that engaging a consumer can be more successful if we make a connection to the consumer by explaining the “why” behind practices implemented instead of just providing facts. For example, dehorning may be a “good management practice” recommended by most in the industry, but this is not a “good enough” reason for some consumers. Helping them understand that it is in the animal’s best interest from a welfare standpoint and safety of those around them may bridge the gap in a more acceptable way. Michele also gave us examples of how mediums such as social media can be used to tell our story.

I have learned through my own experiences that being a self-proclaimed advocate for the beef industry is not enough. To be more effective in advocacy we need to become better at engagement. As with anything in life, to stay the best we must constantly strive to be better. If you want to become better at engaging the consumer in advocacy efforts, participating in programs such as the Beef Checkoff’s “Master of Beef Advocacy” program is a good start. Also, taking every opportunity to learn from engagement experts, such as Michele Payne, can provide a better picture of how to tell the real story of beef production.

Resources for improving your engagement skills in “advocacy”:

<https://www.beef.org/mastersofbeefadvocacy.aspx>

Causematters.org 



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