

Iowa nutritionist recommends buffering light feeder calves

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Lightweight calves under 400 pounds give operators of large feedlots more marketing flexibility when margins are tight, says Allen Trenkle, Iowa State University beef specialist and nutritionist.

Cattle producers buying lighter calves on reduce feedlot turnover, important when supplies are limited, and may be more selective when buying replacement stock. But lightweight calves need extra tender care.

Incoming calves should be immediately checked for disease and supplied with fresh feed and water to provide a quick burst of energy and prevent dehydration, says Trenkle. He suggests starting young cattle with a receiving ration of 30 percent corn, 55 percent chopped hay, 7 percent molasses and 8 percent natural protein supplement. Where

silage is fed, a ration of 30 percent hay, 62 to 64 percent corn silage and 6 to 8 percent natural protein supplement will get light cattle off to a good start.

Lightweight calves need higher levels of digestible protein to gain weight quickly and attain good feed efficiency, comments Trenkle. Skimping on protein supplement is a poor practice, he says, that is responsible for slowed growth that costs cattlemen more in the long run. Urea should not be fed in rations for lightweight cattle, he warns.

"Young cattle are growing mostly lean tissue. An adequate supply of natural protein remains critical to their growth up to 500 to 600 pounds. Once they achieve that weight, it's usually safe to begin feeding non-protein nitrogen," he explains.

High costs are pushing feedlots to finish cattle as soon as

possible, gradually converting them to a higher grain level early in the feeding cycle. However, ruminants trying to adapt to high energy feedstuffs at an early age are susceptible to loss of appetite and digestive upsets.

One prime concern for cattle producers is a potential buildup of rumen acids. Cattle neutralize excess rumen acids naturally with sodium bicarbonate secreted in their saliva.

But young cattle salivate less and thus have a less effective natural buffering system, notes Trenkle. Feeding supplemental bicarb at 0.5 percent of dry matter helps them adapt to high grain rations earlier in the feeding period, he says.

"The most consistent positive responses to bicarb have occurred when it's fed at high levels to lightweight cattle. A high grain, low roughage ration can be a problem with cattle at

any size, but it is an acute problem in lighter weight cattle."

The greatest response to bicarb supplementation has been recorded in experiments where cattle were fed rapidly fermenting rations — corn silage, wheat and more exotic feeds, such as potato waste.

Cattle producers feeding any of these

rations will benefit most from bicarb supplementation, Trenkle adds.

Check your yard daily to see if any cattle are having difficulty adjusting to ration changes," he recommends. You may want to alter the percentage of bicarb in their ration until you find an optimum level for your particular feedlot.

Thorncroft to host horse show

MALVERN — The University of Delaware Equestrian Club is sponsoring an Intercollegiate Horse Show on Sunday, March 15, at Thorncroft Stables, Malvern, Pa. Riders from 20 regional colleges and universities will participate—but none from Delaware.

The 60 members of the Delaware club will be too busy to ride. As the sponsors, one of their many jobs will be to hire horses from nearby stables. Riders will have to pick the names of the horses they'll be riding out of a hat.

According to Cindy Brandon, a member of the Delaware

Equestrian Team, riding an unfamiliar horse over fences and on the flat really tests a rider's skill. The system is also a boon to students who don't have their own horses, or who don't have their horses with them at college. It gives everyone a chance to participate.

The Delaware riders will have their chance to participate in nine shows sponsored by other schools in the region later in the season, according to their advisor, Dr. C.M. Reintour. They'll be traveling through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

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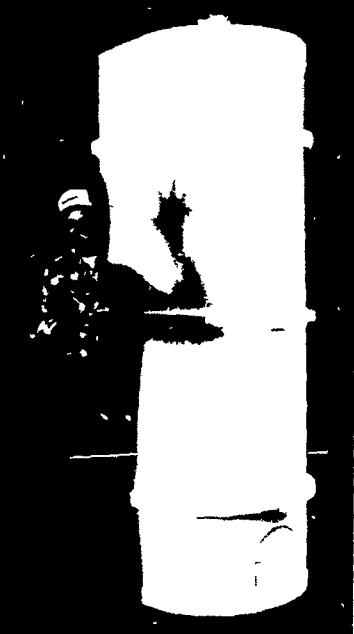
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