

## Cattle feeders need good receiving program

LANCASTER — Pennsylvania cattle feeders can improve profit potential by paying closer attention to the health and nutritional needs of their calves through well-planned receiving programs, says one cattle researcher.

Dean Hodge, Ralston Purina Company beef cattle researcher, says the objective is to help newly received calves overcome the stress caused by weaning and shipping to feedlots.

Receiving programs, he explains, are comparable to preconditioning, but focus on the three-to four-week period after calves arrive at the feedlot. Preconditioning, on the other hand, is designed for calves following weaning and prior to shipping.

"Every step in these programs is essential," Hodge says. "In helping to restore a stressed calf to peak performance condition.

Shipping, he explains, leads to stress, with calves becoming weak or anorexic. This in turn, leads to weight loss or sickness. However, Hodge points out, proper nutrition can help overcome this stress and restore normal digestion.

Bacteria inside a calf's rumen, he explains, are responsible for converting feed eaten by a calf into nutrients used to promote growth and combat disease. "These bacteria starve when a calf doesn't eat. Cattlemen know that the first sign a calf is distressed is when it stops eating," Hodge says.

After a calf has gone two days without eating, Hodge continues, nearly all the bacteria may be dead. Without these bacteria to produce essential nutrients, the calf begins to lose weight along

with its natural immunity to disease and infection.

"The key to restoring proper rumen function and immunity is getting calves onto full feed as soon as possible," Hodge emphasizes. "The best way to do that is to start calves on good quality grass hay the first day after arriving at the feedlot, and then onto a highly palatable ration, such as Preconditioning/Receiving Chow, on the second day."

He says the natural palatability of this ration gets stressed calves onto full feed quickly. Each pellet contains a carefully formulated balance of nutrients which researchers have found restores full rumen function quickly. "Calves should remain on Preconditioning/Receiving Chow for 21 to 28 days to maximize its potential advantage," Hodge notes.

Besides putting a calf onto feed as quickly as possible, receiving programs also require additional vaccinations as recommended by local veterinarians. And if the calf has not been preconditioned, it should be dehorned, castrated and given other medical protection.

Cattle feeders who have put their calves onto a receiving program upon arrival at the feedlot have reported gains of 50-80 pounds during the three-to four-week period their calves were on the program, Hodge says. Calves usually, he adds, lose weight during this period.

A receiving program does more than just help a calf to gain weight, Hodge insists. It also prevents many diseases, such as respiratory infections, which are caused by stress. Cattlemen in the Lancaster area have reported that

respiratory infections among newly weaned cattle arriving on feedlots has become a serious problem.

Glenn Shields, a divisional sales manager for Purina, points out that most cattlemen in the Lancaster area operate small feedlots of 100 to 200 head of cattle with primarily two types — six-month-old newly weaned calves, and yearlings between 700 and 900 pounds.

However, John Bowman, a cattle broker for B & R Cattle, said that because of the health problems associated with shipping newly weaned calves, most cattlemen "had completely gotten away from calves." He said these cattlemen had experienced high "death loss" with calves. In a few cases, he says, cattlemen had lost between 6 and 7 percent of their feedlot cattle, primarily due to respiratory infections.

Bowman also said that feedlot operators indicate they would return to lighter weight calves if they could be assured they wouldn't have further death loss problems.

Chester Hughes, a beef specialist for the Lancaster County extension office, said much of the problem originates as a result of poor weaning management of source of the feeder cattle: cow/calf operators. To prevent such problems, calves should be properly preconditioned before being shipped to the feedlot. However, Hughes notes that "many cow/calf operators do not wean calves long enough before shipping them."

Hodge says preconditioning requires calves to be adjusted to eating feed at least three weeks

before shipping. In addition, calves should be vaccinated for various diseases, as well as castrated, dehorned and healed prior to shipment.

Preconditioned calves, Hodge points out, have been attracting average premiums of \$5 more per hundred weight. He says cattle feeders are willing to pay more for them because of the weight advantage and the knowledge they are getting a healthier calf.

Erskin Cash, a Pennsylvania State University animal science

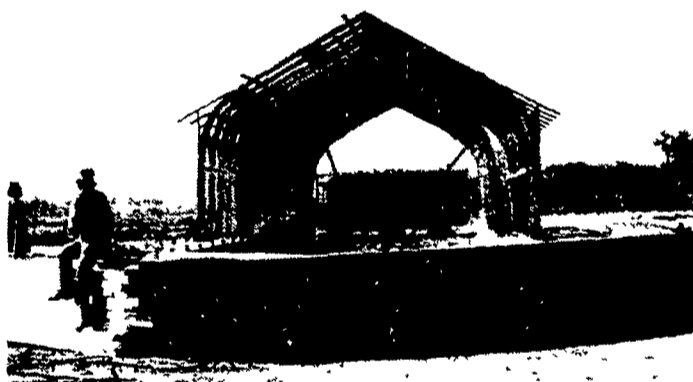
professor, says preconditioning and receiving programs are beneficial for both cattle producers and feeders. "The concept is good," Cash concludes. "Once newly arrived calves are accustomed to eating feed prior to arriving at the feedlot, they adapt more readily to the feedlot."

And, calves that adapt more readily to the feedlot, Hodge points out, require less finishing time with the end result being extra money for cattle feeders.

## Bankert shows champion hog



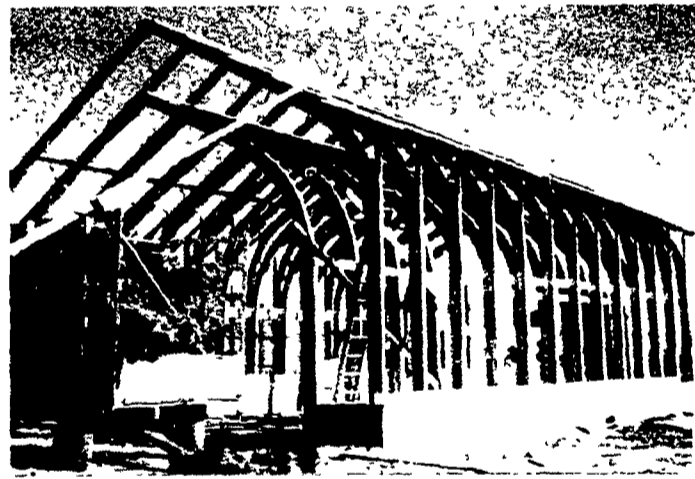
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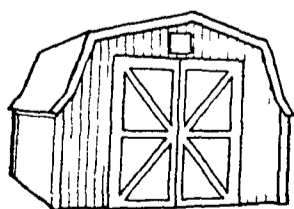
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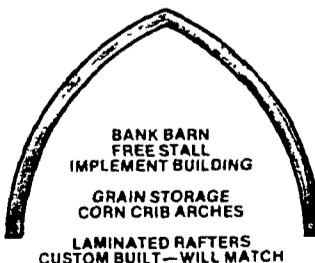
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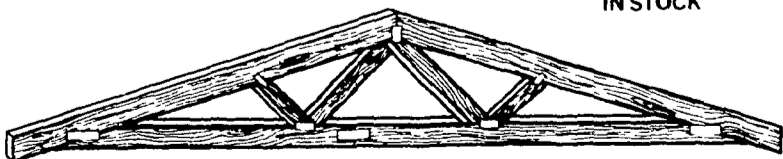


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