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Cattle Producer's Guide to Feedlot Terminology

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This publication is intended to familiarize cow-calf producers with the terminology that feedlot managers may use when discussing custom feeding and feedlots.

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■ Acidosis

An acute or chronic disease condition in feedlot cattle. Results from overconsumption or too rapid consumption of grain (starch). Acute cases generally result in death. Chronic cases are common and result in erratic intakes and/or reduced feed intake but probably are hidden by pen intakes, which tend to make average consumption look normal. It is one of the most costly problems in the feedlot industry. Subacute cases are difficult to diagnose, but symptoms include poor performance and poor conversions.

■ ADG

Average daily gain. The amount of gain divided by the number of days in the feeding period.

■ As-is Basis

Feed is sold "as is," with no adjustments for moisture content.

Also see Dry-matter Basis.

■ Bawling Calves

Calves that are taken directly off the cow and weaned at the feedlot, requiring additional labor and a greater degree of health management by the feedlot.

■ Beta Agonists

Feed additives improve efficiency by partitioning energy away from fat accumulation and toward muscle growth in feedlot cattle. Weight gain, rib-eye area and total red meat yield are increased when they are used. Beta agonists approved for use in the U.S. include Actogain 45 from Zoetis, Optaflex from Elanco Animal Health and Zilmax from Intervet Inc. However, Zilmax was removed voluntarily from the marketplace in 2013.

■ Breakeven

The sale price (\$/hundredweight, or cwt) at which the customer or owner of the cattle does not make or lose money.

■ Buller(s)

Steers that are ridden by other steers in the pen (as with cows or heifers that are "bulling"). If problems persist, animals usually are removed from the pen to prevent bruising, injury and reduction in performance of the other cattle.

■ Buller Pen

Pen in which bullers are kept.

■ **Bunk Call or Bunk Reading**

Deciding how much feed should be delivered and when it should be delivered

■ **Bunk Management**

The philosophy the feedlot manager uses to determine the amount of feed to offer. *Also see Slick Bunk Management.*

■ **Bunk Reader**

The person at the feedlot who is responsible for deciding the daily amount of feed delivered to the cattle. This person is critical to the successful feeding of high-concentrate diets. *Also see Bunk Call, Feed Call, Missing the Call.*

■ **Byproducts or Coproducts**

Feed ingredients produced during the production of human food products (for example, corn sweetener, flour, cooking oils, sugar) or industrial products (for example, ethanol, industrial oils). These byproducts are used as ingredients in some growing and finishing diets. *Also see Wet Distillers Grains, Wet Corn Gluten Feed.*

■ **Byproduct or Coproduct Inclusion**

The amount of byproduct or coproduct included in the diet on a dry-matter basis.

■ **Calf-feds**

Cattle that are placed on feed as calves and finished at less than 16 months of age. Calf-feds may be on feed from 150 to as long as 300 days, depending on the production system. These cattle usually are placed in the feedlot directly following weaning. *Also see Yearlings.*

■ **Carry Cattle**

Cattle that are held at the packing plant during a holiday or weekend. These cattle may be penned at the plant for 36 to 84 hours before being slaughtered. These cattle generally are offered feed and water if held for more than 36 hours.

■ **Charging the Bunk**

Condition resulting from errors in bunk calls, feed delivery or inclement weather. Cattle will rush to the bunk when the feed truck comes because they are hungry and overeat, resulting in problems such as acidosis, founder and other digestive disturbances.

■ **Chronic(s)**

Cattle that fail to respond to treatment. *Also see Realizer and Railer.*

■ **Chute Charges**

A fee charged by some feedlots each time cattle are worked through the chute.

■ **Clean Bunk Management**

Refers to the bunk management style in which cattle clean up all the feed offered every day. Feed call is increased if cattle have “slicked the bunk.” *Also see Charging the Bunk, Bunk Management and Slicked Up.*

■ **Close-outs**

A detailed description of pen performance, feed intake, death loss, and profit or loss. A close-out is generated each time a pen of cattle is sold. Can be calculated on a “deads-in” or “deads-out” basis.

■ **Company Cattle**

Cattle that are owned and fed by the feedlot. *Also see Customer Cattle.*

■ **Consulting Nutritionist, Feed Company**

A nutritionist employed by a feed company who assists the feedlot with professional opinions on rations, supplements, feed additives and management practices. The feed company provides these services when the feedlot purchases supplements or other feed ingredients from the feed company. *Also see Consulting Nutritionist, Private.*

■ **Consulting Nutritionist, Private**

A private nutritionist hired by the feedlot to give professional opinions on rations, supplements, feed additives and management practices. Usually paid on a retainer plus a per-head fee. *Also see Consulting Nutritionist, Feed Company.*

■ **Consulting Veterinarian**

A veterinarian hired by the feedlot to consult on animal health-related issues such as vaccines and treatments. Usually paid on a retainer plus a per-head fee.

■ **Corn Syrup or Corn Condensed Distillers Solubles (CCDS)**

A liquid byproduct of the ethanol industry. It contains relatively high levels of protein and fat and can be used in feedlot diets to control dust and improve palatability.

■ **Cost of Gain**

Total of all feedlot-related costs (feed, yardage, processing, medicine, interest and death loss) divided by total gain during the feeding period. Can be calculated on a “deads-in” or “deads-out” basis.

■ **Custom Feed Yard**

A feed yard that feeds, manages and markets cattle for customers. Fees are charged for feed, pharmaceuticals and other services.

■ **Customer Cattle**

Cattle that are owned by an investor, rancher or other client of the feedlot and fed and managed for a fee. *Also see Company Cattle.*

■ **Dark Cutter(s)**

Carcasses with muscle tissue that is dark colored rather than the desirable cherry red. Usually the result of depletions in muscle glycogen stores. Can be influenced, cattle handling techniques, weather, sex of cattle and implant strategy.

■ Days on Feed

The number of days the cattle are fed.

■ Deads In/Deads Out

Refers to the methods used to calculate close-outs, cost of gains and breakevens. These can be calculated with the “deads in” or “deads out” of the calculations. “Deads in” refers to leaving the dead cattle in the calculations, while “deads out” refers to leaving the dead cattle out of the calculations.

■ Digestive

A death resulting from a digestive disorder.

■ Distillers Dried Grains Plus Solubles (DDGS)

A byproduct of the dry milling (ethanol) industry. Commonly used as an ingredient in feedlots in proximity to dry milling plants. Can be produced from a variety of grains (corn, milo, barley, wheat). Contains 10% to 12% moisture. *Also see Byproducts or Coproducts.*

■ Dressing Percent

Carcass weight divided by final live weight times 100. (Typically ranges from 62% to 65% for slaughter cattle.) Live weights may be adjusted for pencil shrink at the feedyard, local scale, or live weight at the plant.

■ Drunk Cattle

Cattle that are experiencing acidosis due to overconsumption or too rapid consumption of high-grain diets.

■ Dry-matter Basis

Feed is sold on a “dry” basis following adjustments for variations in moisture content. *Also see As-is Basis.*

■ Dry Rolling

Grain processing method in which grain is rolled without steaming.

■ Dry Supplement

Supplement that is fed in a dry form in a mixed ration. Can be pelleted or in a meal form.

■ Eared Cattle

Cattle with significant *Bos indicus* (Brahman) breeding.

■ Earlage

Ensiled corn grain, cobs and, in some cases, husks and a portion of the stalk (depends on the harvest method). Earlage typically is harvested with a forage harvester much like corn silage would be harvested. Earlage is higher in energy than corn silage and has similar protein content, but it has lower energy than dry or high-moisture corn grain.

■ Feed Additive Combinations

Feed additives such as antibiotics and other products may be fed only in combination when expressly noted on the feed additive label published by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA has responsibility and authority related to the use of various combinations of feed additives. Feeding products in combination when not noted on the label is prohibited.

■ Feed Alley

The road used by the feed trucks to deliver feed to the pen.

■ Feed Call

The amount of ration that is fed to a particular pen. *Also see Missing the Call, Bunk Call.*

■ Feed Conversion

The amount of feed consumed by an animal per unit of body weight gain. Expressed as pounds of feed per pound of gain. *Also see Feed Efficiency.*

■ Feed Cost of Gain

Total feed costs divided by total pounds of gain. *Also see Cost of Gain.*

■ Feed Efficiency

The amount of feed consumed by an animal per unit of body weight gain. *Also see Feed Conversion.*

■ Feed Markup

The amount the feedlot marks up the feed charges. Charges vary from feedlot to feedlot. Feed markup can be charged as a percentage of the feed bill or as a flat fee per ton of feed.

■ Finisher or Final Finisher

The final diet cattle will be fed during the feeding period. Usually contains 5% to 10% roughage, but it may be an all-concentrate (no roughage) diet, depending on the feedlot.

■ Flaker

A mill that steam flakes grain.

■ Gluten or Gluten Feed

See Wet Corn Gluten Feed.

■ Grass Cattle

Cattle that were grown on pasture prior to placement in the feedlot. *Also see Yearlings.*

■ Green Cattle

Cattle that are relatively thin, with only small amounts of body condition. *Also see Soggy Cattle.*

■ Grid(s)

A method of pricing slaughter cattle that offers premiums and discounts for cattle. Cattle that are leaner and have a higher quality grade receive the premiums. Grids generally have other specifications for carcass weight and dark cutters as well.

■ Grow Yard

An operation that grows or backgrounds cattle for a period of time before they enter the feedlot for finishing. May be used to wean calves because the operations generally have a higher ratio of employees to cattle and can give sick calves extra attention.

■ Haylage

Forage that has been ensiled for the purposes of preservation. A variety of forages may be classified as haylage, including alfalfa, oats, rye, triticale and wheat. Haylage typically is harvested by swathing or windrowing, allowing the forage to dry to 45% to 60% moisture, chopping with a forage harvester and storing in an oxygen-limiting silo.

■ Heiferettes

Heifers placed on feed following the loss of a calf or open heifers placed on feed following the breeding season.

■ High-moisture Corn

Corn that is harvested when moisture levels are 22% to 32%. Generally, this corn is ground or rolled and stored in pit or bunker silos. It also can be stored whole and processed before feeding. *Also see Pit Corn.*

■ Hospital Pen

Place where sick cattle are treated before being returned to the home pen. *Also see Sick Pen.*

■ In the Beef

Method of sale that refers to selling the cattle on a carcass weight basis rather than live weight. Usually carcass weight times carcass price with no discounts for Choice or Select. *Also see Live.*

■ Ionophore

Antibiotic that enhances feed efficiency in cattle by altering ruminal fermentation. (Rumensin, monensin; Bovatec, lasalocid; and Cattlyst, laidlomycin propionate are the Food and Drug Administration-approved ionophores used in diets for finishing cattle).

■ Inventory Gain/Loss

The amount of gain or loss in feed inventory due to storage, milling and processing feed.

■ Limit Feeding

Limiting feed intake to achieve a desired rate of gain during the growing period. Used in growing and backgrounding situations to have cattle ready for market at a specific point in time. *Also see Programmed Feeding.*

■ Liquid Supplement

Liquid supplement based on molasses that contains urea or another nonprotein nitrogen (NPN) source. Used to provide supplemental protein in a finishing diet. May also contain supplemental phosphorus, salt, ionophores and other feed additives. Most liquid supplements contain a suspension agent to keep the ingredients and feed additives in suspension during storage.

■ Live

Method of sale in which the cattle are sold to the packer “live” at the feedlot. At times, the packer is responsible for transporting the animals to the slaughter facility. *Also see In the Beef.*

■ Liver Abscesses

Disease condition of the liver in which rumen microflora infect the liver due to breaks in the rumen wall caused by acidosis. In severe cases, liver function is impaired and performance reduced.

■ Long Yearlings

Yearlings that have had an extended period of grazing. Usually placed on feed in the fall following a full summer grazing season. Fed for 120 days or less. *Also see Short Yearlings or Yearlings.*

■ Melengesterol Acetate (MGA)

A steroidal feed additive that is used to suppress estrus or cyclic activity in feedlot heifers.

■ Metaphylaxis or Mass Medication

The practice of treating a whole herd or pen of cattle with antibiotics if they are at risk of suffering an outbreak of infectious disease due to exposure to pathogens or unfavorable host or environmental conditions. *See prophylaxis.*

■ Micro Machine

Machine that adds micro ingredients such as ionophores, antibiotics and other ingredients to the diet in a water-based slurry.

■ Mill Man

Employee in charge of the feed mill.

■ Missing the Call

Making a mistake in reading the bunk. *Also see Bunk Call, Feed Call.*

■ Modified Wet Distillers Grains Plus Solubles (MWDGS)

A byproduct of the dry milling (ethanol) industry. Commonly used as an ingredient in feedlots in proximity to dry milling plants. Can be produced from a variety of grains (corn, milo, barley, wheat). Contains approximately 50% moisture. *Also see Byproducts or Coproducts.*

■ NPN

Abbreviation for nonprotein nitrogen. Urea is a common source of NPN. *Also see Liquid Supplement.*

■ Overeaters

Cattle that eat too much on a high-grain diet.

■ Pay Weight

Shrunk live weight of an animal at the time of sale. Usually 4%. *Also see Pencil Shrink.*

■ Pen Deads

Cattle that are found dead in the pen. Cause of death is usually unknown.

■ Pen Rider

Employee who rides through the pens to look for sick cattle.

■ Pencil Shrink

An arithmetic deduction of weight from the live weight of an animal to account for fill, usually 3% for cattle off pasture and 4% for off-feed weights of fed cattle. *Also see Pay Weight.*

■ Pit Corn

High-moisture corn that has been ground and stored in a bunker or pit silo. *Also see High-moisture Corn.*

■ Processing

Vaccinating, treating for internal and external parasites, ear tagging, and other procedures such as implanting, dehorning and castration that are done soon after cattle arrive at the feedlot.

■ Programmed Feeding

A feeding routine that is used to achieve a specific rate of gain and limit feed intake. Used in growing and backgrounding situations to have cattle ready for market at a specific date. *Also see Limit Feeding.*

■ Projections

Projecting the days on feed, cost of gain and breakeven for a particular pen of cattle. This is done when the pen is placed in the lot. Generally, this is the responsibility of the manager or assistant manager.

■ Prophylaxis

Treating an individual animal for a disease condition or injury. *See metaphylaxis.*

■ Pulls

Cattle that have been pulled from their home pen for treatment. *Also see Pulling Cattle.*

■ Pulling Cattle

Removing cattle from the pen for treatment. *Also see Pulls.*

■ Put-together Cattle

Cattle that have been assembled by an order buyer from small lots.

■ Quality Grade

A grade placed on each carcass by the U.S. Department of Agriculture inspector at the packing plant. Quality grade is based on the degree of marbling and degree of maturity. Color, texture and firmness of lean also are used in the final quality grade determination.

■ Rail-out

A carcass that has been placed on a special rail in the packing plant so that the USDA inspector can make a more detailed inspection of the carcass.

■ Railer(s)

Cattle that fail to respond to treatment. *Also see Chronic or Realizer.*

■ Realizer(s)

Cattle that fail to respond to treatment. *Also see Chronic or Railer.*

■ Receiving

Getting new cattle into the feedlot.

■ Reimplanting

Giving cattle their second implant (usually done only with calf-feds or long-fed yearlings).

■ Respiratory

A death resulting from pneumonia or related respiratory disease.

■ Roughage or Forage Dry Matter

The amount of roughage or forage included in the diet on a dry-matter basis.

■ Short Yearlings

Cattle placed on feed after being weaned. Usually placed on feed March through July. Fed for 120 to 160 days. *Also see Yearlings or Long Yearlings.*

■ Show List

The pens of cattle the manager is offering for sale to packer buyers during a particular week.

■ Shrink

See Pencil Shrink or Inventory Gain/Loss.

■ Sick Pen

Pen where sick animals and animals recovering from treatment are kept. *Also see Hospital Pen.*

■ Slicked Up

Refers to the fact the cattle have cleaned up their feed or “slicked the bunk.” Cattle have “slicked the bunk” with saliva. Bunks that are “slick and wet” have just been slicked. Bunks that are “slick and dry” have been slicked for some time. *Also see Bunk Management or Clean Bunk Management.*

■ Soggy Cattle

Cattle from a backgrounding or growing operation that are fleshy or overly conditioned. *Also see Green Cattle.*

■ Steam Flaker

Grain processing method in which grain is subjected to steaming before rolling or flaking.

■ Step-ups

The rations used to acclimate cattle to high-grain diets. Length of time that cattle are fed these diets varies. Generally, the amount of concentrate is increased gradually. The first week in the feedlot, the cattle may be fed a 45% roughage diet, the second week a 35% roughage diet, etc., until the cattle are on the final finisher.

■ Storm Diet

A diet fed during periods of stormy weather to help keep cattle on feed. Usually contains more roughage.

■ Surfactant

An additive used to aid in grain processing.

■ Terminal Implant Window

The days between when the final implant is administered and the day the cattle are marketed to the slaughter plant.

■ Trenbolone Acetate (TBA)

Active ingredient in some implants approved for use in feedlot cattle.

■ Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD)

The veterinary feed directive is a set of rules recently implemented by the Food and Drug Administration. The rules govern the use of feed-grade antibiotics in food animals. Among other things, the VFD requires a valid veterinary client patient relationship to be in place prior to prescribing antibiotics. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/UnderstandingVFD> for more information on the VFD.

■ Warmed-up Cattle

Cattle that have been grown in a backgrounding yard prior to being placed on feed.

■ Wet Corn

See *High Moisture Corn* or *Pit Corn*.

■ Wet Corn Gluten Feed

A byproduct of the wet corn milling industry that is made by blending corn bran and corn steep liquor. A common ingredient in finishing rations in Iowa, eastern Nebraska, southeastern South Dakota and southern Minnesota. Also see *Byproducts* or *Coproducts*.

■ Wet Distillers Grains Plus Solubles

A byproduct of the dry milling (ethanol) industry. Commonly used as an ingredient in feedlots in proximity to dry milling plants. Can be produced from a variety of grains (corn, milo, barley, wheat). Typically contains 65% to 70% water. Also see *Byproducts* or *Coproducts*.

■ Yardage

Charges incurred each day that the cattle are in the feedlot. These charges vary depending on the lot. Usually on a cents per head per day basis.

■ Yearlings

Cattle that are placed on feed at greater than 1 year of age. Generally fed for 80 to 150 days. Also see *Calf-feds*, *Short Yearlings* or *Long Yearlings*.

■ Yield Grade

A numerical grade placed on each carcass by the USDA inspector at the packing plant that estimates differences in the yield of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts from the round, rib, loin and chuck. Factors determining yield grade include fat thickness at the 12th rib, rib-eye area, hot carcass weight, and the amount of kidney, pelvic and heart fat. Lower yield grades (1) indicate leaner carcasses, while higher yield grades (5) indicate fatter carcasses.

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