

FEEDLOT CATTLE & CATTLE PELLETS



Kojonup Feeds have developed **Feedlot Starter & Finisher Pellets** to provide producers with a simple, cost-effective option for finishing cattle. They contain a balanced range of macro-minerals, trace elements, and vitamins. Rumensin® is included to improve FCE and minimise the risk of bloat.

INTRODUCTION

Calves placed in a feedlot have to adapt physiologically to high grain rations, socially to an intensive management system and behaviourally to a novel feeding system. Adaptation can be facilitated by appropriate management to ensure a profitable outcome. It is important to minimise the impact of social dominance to ensure that calves develop sound feeding patterns and adapt to feed quickly. Feedlots are best suited to value-adding feeder cattle and generally not economic for growing out underweight calves. Lot-feeding can also be an economic option for value-adding mature cattle.

Adhering to the following management guidelines and precautions will facilitate social interaction, sound feeding patterns, safe introduction, and use of Kojonup Feeds grain-based pellets.

SITE SELECTION

- Environmentally sustainable site that will not cause unacceptable odour, dust, or contamination of waterways or groundwater
- 2-4% slope is optimal for run-off and erosion control
- Well-drained or compacted base
- Protection from prevailing weather
- Pens located conveniently to handling facilities and feed storage
- Avoid inclusion of existing trees but consider planted shelter belts

FEEDLOT SET-UP

- 10-15m² per head, allowing the greater area for winter feeding; high stocking density minimises cost, facilitates social interaction, and minimises erosion and dust
- 50 x 30m is a convenient pen size; have more than one pen for flexibility of group management
- Allow for future expansion
- Consider ease of movement of stock and vehicles
- Allow 15-25cm of self-feeder space per head (lower allowance for circular feeders and lighter calves)
- Choose feeders with sloping trays and protection from the weather
- Slides on feeders restrict the amount of feed in the trays and minimise contamination and accumulation of 'fines'
- Hay racks reduce wastage of forage
- Place water well away from feed to minimise contamination
- Value of shade will vary with geographic location; do NOT place shade over self-feeders or water troughs as this encourages cattle to linger and limit access by others
- Secure fencing; gates preferably double-latched
- Consider sleeping mounds for winter feeding

FACILITIES

- Sound handling facilities to ensure good welfare and occupational safety
- All facilities thoughtfully integrated with each other for maximum efficiency

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GROUP MANAGEMENT

- Segregate groups on sex (entires), breed (e.g. British vs Euro vs Tropical vs Dairy), liveweight, body condition, and possibly source as appropriate
- Draft INTO the feedlot rather than OUT
- Remove any 'shy feeders', 'poor doers', and sick cattle as early as possible
- Try to NOT disrupt group structure once feeding has begun

CATTLE SELECTION

- Determine 'what the market wants' and anticipated time on feed to reach specifications
- Different time and degree of trim give different yields by different processors
- Impacting fat colour takes 50 days
- Impacting meat parameters takes 21 days on full feed
- Genetic variation within and between breeds impacts 'finish'
- Higher rates of gain mean more fat in the gain
- Monitor outcomes
- Yard weaning improves feedlot performance
- Backgrounding benefits purchased calves with better performance and less health issues
- Moderate growth rate prior to entry (600-1200 g/d) if possible
- Select sires for desired traits including temperament

PRE-ENTRY TREATMENT

- Full vaccination against 'pulpy kidney' and 'blackleg' (2 shots 4-6 weeks apart); booster if >3 months since previous vaccination. Vaccination against Bovine Respiratory Disease as appropriate
- Vitamin A D E injection if limited access to green feed in previous 2-3 months
- Vitamin B12 injection if in low BCS or off feed for >24 hours
- Drench

BUDGETING

- Budget 7:1 FCE (dry matter) but very variable between systems
- Profit is in efficiently 'value adding the whole animal' rather than weight gain; heavier calves with faster growth rates are more efficient

BUDGETING - CONTINUED

- Expect up to 5% 'shy feeders' and 0.5% mortality and aim for better
- Profit margin is very sensitive to the purchase price of feeder cattle

WATER

- <3000 ppm TDS is ideal; up to 5000 ppm is suitable depending on the mineral(s) present (magnesium is not so good)
- Low volume troughs with good recharge rates are best; choose design for easy cleaning and minimal maintenance
- Locate troughs at the lower end of pens so drainage from leaks and cleaning go directly to the perimeter
- 40-80 litres per head typical daily intake
- 1 metre trough access per 20 head
- Ensure cool supply and bury pipes
- Clean troughs frequently
- Do NOT use dams

FEEDING

- Make palatable hay available ad lib for 24-48 hours until cattle are settled and full and keep available for 7-10 days
- Once cattle are full, make Feedlot Starter Pellets available ad lib in self-feeders
- After 7 days, transition from hay to straw and keep straw available ad lib for the duration of feeding
- After 5-7 days, if cattle have all established intake of pellets, transition to Feedlot Finisher Pellets by filling self-feeders when approximately 2/3 empty. Maintain constant availability of Finisher for the duration of feeding
- If pellets run out, make hay available for 24 hours before re-introducing pellets and consider stepping back to Starter Pellets

FEEDING RELATED HEALTH ISSUES

- Acidosis (grain poisoning): intake of inappropriate amount of grain-based feed e.g. inadequate adaptation, inadequate roughage, feeders run out
- Feedlot bloat: predisposed individuals &/or inadequate roughage
- Enterotoxaemia (pulpy kidney): lack of immunisation on nutritious feed
- Polio-encephalomalacia (star gazer): thiamine deficiency on high grain rations

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