



Receiving New Cattle – Some Important Tips

Getting cattle off to a good start is critical for a successful overall outcome. It has been documented sick cattle can cost a producer as much as \$100.00 per head in treatment cost, lost performance, and carcass merit.

Shipping Shrink

Arrival cattle are subjected to numerous stresses such as handling, commingling, shipping, new surroundings, different feeds/unfamiliar water, weaning, poor handling facilities, and often-poor weather. Cattle often suffer significant shrink from their pay weight as a result. Shrink is in two phases: 1) gut fill loss and 2) tissue or muscle shrink. Shrink beyond 4% is usually tissue shrink and most detrimental. The degree of shrink is dependent upon the distance traveled.

Hours in Transit	% Shrink	Days to Recover Pay Wt.
1 hr	2%	0
2 to 8 hr	4 to 6%	4 to 8
9 to 16 hr	6 to 8%	8 to 16
17 to 24 hr	8 to 10%	16 to 24
25 to 32 hr	10 to 12%	24 to 30

The general rule of thumb is cattle experience 3% shrink from pay weight during the first 100 miles and then 0.5% to 1.0% for each additional 100 miles in transit. Receiving diets need to be high in potassium to help cattle recover lost body weight quickly.

Cattle need to be fed and managed to recover shrink quickly for optimum health and maximum performance.

Management

- Allow cattle to drink as soon as possible after arrival. Water intake and feed intake are

directly related, and this is the first step in recovering shrink.

- Clean waterers daily for the first five days. The noise and activity of cleaning will attract cattle to the water. It often is best to add a water tank located along the fence line where cattle tend to walk after arrival. Allowing a small trickle of water to run over will also attract them to waterers.
- Watch the condition of the manure. Manure that is hard or in high piles often indicates cattle are not finding the water.
- Be careful about adding water medication too soon. Adding electrolytes is good but other medications can impede water intake.
- Receive cattle in the daylight. Also, look for areas where there may be shadows. Cattle have poor depth perception and often view shadows as holes or drop-offs.
- If receiving areas are dusty, wet them down. This will reduce lung irritations and respiratory disease.
- Work cattle within 24 to 36 hours post-arrival. Also, work cattle in groups that can be processed within 30 minutes.
- Consult a veterinarian, making sure a sound vaccination program is established which includes booster shots two to three weeks later.
- Many yards have good success administering an intranasal inoculation off the truck, along with the full round of injectables.

(continued)

- At the initial vaccination, give the cattle a low dose implant such as Ralgro. This has been shown to reduce the effects of shipping stress.
- Make sure there is two feet of bunk space per head for calves upon arrival. Placing bunks along the fence where cattle walk will help them find the feed.
- Consider placing a dry cow or older calf in the pen to help train new cattle how to eat and drink.
- Feed new cattle in the feed yard last. The activity and noise of feeding pens that have been in the yard for a while and established will help condition new calves to eat. Consider feeding new cattle three times per day. This also will condition them to associate noise and activity with feeding.

Diets

- Initially offer long-stemmed hay the first day in the yard. Try to avoid feeding hay on the ground, as this is a good way to ingest coccidia. Avoid feeding round bales for any length of time as this will distract calves from the more nutrient dense starter diet.
- Make sure feeds are free of dust and mold. This will minimize irritations to the lungs and the potential for respiratory disease.
- A nutrient dense grain mix or total mixed ration should be top-dressed on the hay in the bunk. Initially offer the grain mix in an amount equaling 0.50% to 0.75% of body weight. Gradually decrease the hay and increase the starter mix every other day at

no more than 1 lb per head daily. Once cattle are eating 2.0% of their body weight in dry matter, delay diet increases for two to three days. This will keep the cattle a little hungry, making it easier to pick out those slow to the bunk and who need treating.

- Strive to achieve a total diet **dry matter** intake equaling 2.5% of body weight per head daily within ten days post-arrival.
- Avoid introducing fermented feeds such as corn silage until the cattle are eating at least 2.0% of their body weight in dry matter per day. Introduce these feeds at the rate of two to four pounds.
- Highly stressed calves often prefer higher concentrate diets. Consider a two-phase starter program the first seven to ten days and a diet containing 65 to 70% concentrate (54 to 55 NEg diet). In the second phase, reduce energy back to a 40% concentrate diet (48 NEg diet). Fermented feeds could then be introduced with the second phase starter.
- Receiving diets should be nutrient dense, containing 14 to 16% crude protein, high levels of vitamins A and E, as well as copper, zinc, and selenium. Receiving diets should also contain 1.2 to 1.5% potassium to help recover shrink. **Vigortone 4065D** starter premix provides high levels of all of the above nutrients, along with **yeast culture** to stimulate appetite.
- Consider top-dressing **DigestaMax4** to stimulate digestion along the entire digestive tract and promote appetite. This product contains yeast culture, *aspergillus*, digestive enzymes, and probiotic bacteria.