



Knight's Farm Fresh Feeds

Show Steer Management & Feeding Program

Section 1)- Shelter and Facilities

The barn or shed where the cattle are kept does not need to be elaborate. Each calf needs about 75 square feet of shelter. The shelter also needs to be well ventilated and provide adequate, clean bedding. Additionally it is helpful to have ready access to electricity for fans or other electrical tools such as clippers.

Overall you want plenty of exercise room for the calves. While this varies somewhat and will be contingent on your resources, a 100 x 200-foot lot is enough exercise space for two calves. Ideally you want the steer exercised daily by walking him yourself. Pens should be on slope to provide good drainage. The last thing you want is for calves to have to fight a lot of mud. Mud is very counterproductive to weight gain and feed efficiency. It also makes it very difficult to keep animals reasonably clean. This is a major issue on white or light colored cattle. It is a very good idea for the edge of the roof that leads into the pen, if it is down-sloped into the pen, to have a gutter to drain water away from the pens and prevent a mud hole right at the edge of the barn. Also, the entire area should be free of rocks, junk, exposed nails or screws or sharp edges. Fences should be of wood boards, metal runners, cable or woven fence wire. Avoid barbed wire if at all possible. Finally, the pen should provide easy access to catch pens and a head gate or squeeze chute.

Feeding and feed storage areas should be clean obstacle-free. The feed trough should be 6 to 8 inches deep, 12 inches wide and 20 to 24 inches long for each calf that will be eating. The top of the feed trough should be 12 to 20 inches from the ground, depending on the size of the calf.

Section 2)- Weighing Feed

One of the most **IMPORTANT** aspects of feeding animals is knowing how much they eat. Therefore, have some type of scales so you can weigh the feed you are giving them. Guessing the amount of feed you are giving them is not a good practice and can cause many problems through out your project. It can be helpful to you to weigh your calf periodically to check his progress. Note that the more consistent you are on your feed intake and feeding times the more consistent daily gains your steer will have and your steer is less likely to have bloating and feed consumption problems.

The total amount of feed fed per day should be divided into at least 2 meals per day. Feed approximately at 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. You can feed half their daily allowance of feed in the morning and the other half in the evening. During particularly hot weather, cattle may not feel like eating much during the day. The daily feed allotment can be changed to approximately 40% of the feed fed in the morning and 60% in the evening if daytime feed intake is a problem.

Clean out feed or feces found in the feed bunk prior to feeding. Feed should not be allowed to accumulate from feeding to feeding. Ensure the steer consumes the entire feeding and if not slightly decrease the intake. Once the steer is consuming all of its feed you may then increase the feed. Dry matter intake and performance will decline if this is allowed to occur for very long. Be careful if large accumulations occur because this indicates a decrease in feed intake. Upon cleaning out large accumulations of stale feed, cattle may gorge themselves on the new, fresh feed and some cases of "grain bloat" may occur. The other scenario that may occur is the cattle will gorge themselves on the fresh feed in a short amount of time and "slick" or empty the bunk and not consume the next batch of feed you provide.

When starting a calf out with feed begin feeding 2% of their body weight. Example if your calf weights 500 lbs then you should feed him 5lbs in the morning and 5lbs in the afternoon along with free choice hay. If your calf has already been introduced to grain feed then every three days you should increase his intake 1/2 of a pound in the morning and 1/2 of a pound in the afternoon. If you notice that your steer does not clean the entire bunk then decrease the amount of intake to his original amount and wait another three days before an increase. If however your steer is new to grain then increase your intake every 5 to 6 days of a 1/2 of a pound in the morning and

1/2 of a pound in the afternoon for 28 days. After this period you steer should be adjusted to grain and you can increase every three days. Keep in mind all steers should have access to hay at all times and fresh clean water is a key element in the growth and health of the steer. When you are getting close to your show, your steer may max out on his intake by leaving feed in the trough, when this happens do not keep trying to increase his intake keep him where he is at on feed and ensure he cleans the entire feed. If after 5 to 7 days he is still cleaning his trough the try another increase and ensure he finishes, if he does not then your steer is satisfied with his original amount.

Section 3)- Introduction Of A New Calf

Allow your calf to get adjusted to his new surroundings. Some calves may break easier than others; however, with patience and persistence even the difficult calves can be gentled down and handled easily. Be slow and deliberate with movements around your new calf. He has to get used to you and you have to get used to him. Put him in a small area to put his halter on. This may be in a trailer when you are hauling him or in a small pen or even a chute. Use a nylon rope halter that is 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch in diameter. Make sure the halter fits properly. Keep the nose portion of the halter on the upper third of the nose but out of his eyes. This will provide control and prevent slippage. Let him drag the halter for a few days before tying him up for the first time. Tie him about eye level to a secure fence post. Always use a slip knot when tying your steer. If he falls and you need to untie him, do so, but try not to let him go! He needs to learn that he can't get away. Stay with him while he is tied for the first few times. You need to be able to help him if he gets in a situation and needs help getting up again. Depending on your schedule, tie him up between 30 minutes and four hours at a time. When you let him go, don't let him jerk the rope from your hands. This will teach him to have respect for the halter and that he can't get away whenever he wants to. Begin touching your steer as soon as possible. You can start with a broom or show stick. This will keep you safe and allow him to get used to being handled. Don't poke, just scratch and rub. As soon as he will let you stand close to him, rub him with your hands. Run your hands over his body, between his legs around his head, over his back, etc. Talk to him all the time to calm him and be slow and deliberate in your motions. Be patient and calm.

Section 4)- Teaching To Lead

Use the pull, release and reward method. Put steady pressure on the rope, pulling toward you. Give him a little slack to see if he responds to the reward of releasing the pressure. Some calves will not budge. Be patient and deliberate. If he doesn't want to move, tug firmly on the rope while maintaining steady pressure. This will make his head "bob" as you tug. Often he will take a step forward. When he does, reward him and relieve the pressure. Remember don't give him his head all the way, just relieve the pressure. Keep repeating this method until he leads well. This will take a week or so. Then when he stops you can repeat this and he will remember to come to the pressure and be rewarded with relief! Once he responds well to you in a small pen you can take him out to a larger pen or pasture. The more environments he can be introduced to, the better he will handle at the show.

For further question pertaining to Show Steers and Heifers please contact:

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