



Top 10 Tips For Starting Cattle

- 1. Long Stem Hay** should be fed in the bunk for the first 12 hours. Grass hay is preferred. Put the hay in the bunk after the cattle arrive to help them find the bunk. After the first 12 hours you can deliver mixed ration on top of the long stem hay.
- 2. Feed Deliveries** should be targeted at 1.5% of bodyweight and work the cattle up evenly to 2.5% of their body weight. The number of days will depend on the weight and stress level of the cattle coming in – from 21-28 days on high stressed light calves, to 5-7 days on low stress yearlings. Overfeeding the cattle will result in acidosis which can contribute to respiratory disease and which can effect feed intakes for the rest of the days on feed.
- 3. Water intake** – drives feed intake. Water should be clean and easily accessible. You should have one watering space per 20 calves, so if there are 100 calves 5 should be able to drink at the same time. Calves that have only drank from streams or ponds may not find an automatic waterer. You may have to set the waterer or tank to overflow to help calves find it. Waterers set in the fenceline can help circling calves find it. Electrolytes added to the water can be beneficial to stressed cattle.
- 4. Limit fermented feeds** to 25% of the ration. Wet rations will limit dry matter intakes, and fermented feeds are a new taste to most incoming cattle. It is good to introduce fermented feeds into the diet, but too much will lower intakes.
- 5. Protein** is required to fuel the reproduction of rumen microbes which encourages feed intake, and protein is needed to build immunoglobulins for improved vaccine response and health status. Protein levels in the starting diet should be 13-14%.
- 6. Supplement or Balancer** should be fed at the full rate from day 1, to be sure that calves get their full dose of protein, additive, trace minerals and vitamins.
- 7. Ionophore** fed at the proper level in the starter ration will control coccidiosis as well as improving rumen efficiency. Check the proper feeding rate of your chosen ionophore.
- 8. Medication** can be effective in controlling respiratory diseases. Feed grade medications such as Aureomycin will require a Veterinary Feed Directive, while the most effective injectable antibiotics will require a prescription from your veterinarian.
- 9. Facilities** – cattle should be started in pens that keep calves fairly close to the bunk and water. Be sure the pens are clean and dry. Make sure that your working facilities don't add stress to the cattle or to you – if it stresses the cattle the treatment will not be as effective, and if they stress you it is likely you may hesitate to treat cattle that need it. Chutes that do not restrain cattle properly will make implanting more difficult and could result in spilled, balled or crushed implants. Hospital pens provide a place where sick cattle can be segregated and treated with some TLC. This will speed the recovery of sick cattle and slow the spread of disease.
- 10. Processing** should be done sooner than later to boost immunity. A good rule of thumb is to let calves rest for the same number of hours that they were on the truck. Calves can be revaccinated and implanted in 14-21 days.

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