



Managing Feed Deliveries (Part 5 of the Bunk Management Series)

The goal of managed feed deliveries is to match as closely as possible the amount of feed delivered to the amount of feed the cattle will consume. To keep nutrient intake consistent, adjustments to feed deliveries need to be done carefully. The tendency for most cattle feeders is to over correct.

Reading and scoring the feed bunk is an essential tool in making proper feed delivery adjustments. This allows you to better estimate how much the cattle have eaten so you can make the proper adjustments.

SDSU Bunk Scoring System	
Score	Description
0	No feed remaining in the bunk-a "slick bunk"
1/2	Scattered feed in the bottom of the bunk, at least 1/2 of the bottom of the bunk is exposed
1	The bottom of the bunk is completely covered, about the depth of one kernel
2	25-50% of the feed is remaining
3	>50% of the feed is remaining, with the crown or peak of the feed thoroughly disturbed
4	The feed is virtually untouched, the crown of the feed is still noticeable

The goal would be to maintain bunk scores of 0 or ½ every day.

When the cattle have a bunk score of 0 three days in a row, they are ready to eat more. You can increase their feed delivery by .5 - .75# of dry matter per head per day, and then hold them at that level for at least 3 days before increasing the dry matter delivery again.

If the cattle leave feed in the bunk, estimate what percent of yesterday's delivery is there to make an adjustment. For example, if you delivered 10,000# of ration yesterday, and you estimate 25% is left (2,500#) then the cattle consumed 7,500#. If the feed is still in good condition and you want the cattle to clean it up you would deliver 5,000# of new ration for 7,500# total. Once cattle are cleaning the bunk you can work them back up on feed.

When cattle get knocked off feed due to weather or some other event, you should look back at the average feed delivery for the previous 10 days and use that as your target once the bunks are clean.

Nobody wants to throw feed out, but cleaning bunks is important for maintaining steady intakes. Delivering good feed on top of bad feed will reduce intakes, and can lead to cattle eating too fast when the bunk is finally cleaned out, which greatly increases the risk of metabolic deaths.

If the feed is not out of condition, you can give them one day to clean it up. On the second day scoop the bunks. If feed has been rained on, scoop it out. If feed has been snowed on, scoop it out. If the feed bunks are full of snow, scoop them out.

If feeding once a day, afternoon or evening feed deliveries can be beneficial. This makes it easier to see when the bunks are cleaned up so you can make better delivery adjustments. In the summer, you will be delivering feed when the cattle are more likely to eat and the feed won't be sitting in the hot sun all day.

Feeding twice a day can stimulate cattle to eat more. Instead of the traditional 12 hour interval for twice a day feeding, you can consider making the two deliveries 2-3 hours apart. This allows the more timid cattle to come to the bunk at the second feeding with less competition from the more aggressive cattle.



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