



# ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

September 21, 2016

## Attitude is Everything... Almost

You have probably heard the saying that 'Attitude is everything' and that is true in many aspects of life. However, there are some situations in which having a positive attitude just isn't enough. It takes a person who decides they are going to do whatever it takes, whether they really want to or not.

The markets lately have given most of us a reason to have a pretty poor attitude. The easy thing to do is to complain and blame someone else for the difficult situations we find ourselves in. But, we need to remember that we need to manage the things that we can actually impact and leave the rest at the door.

### In a Nutshell

- \* Be aware of feed shrink and manage for less feed loss
- \* Feeding an ionophore helps improve gain and feed efficiency
- \* Vaccination programs keep your calves out of the dead pile
- \* A good nutrition program keeps the calves gaining
- \* Marketing is too important to neglect, find someone willing to take the time to do it
- \* We still sell calves by the pound and every pound is important

When it comes to your costs and backgrounding your calves this fall and taking care of your cow herd, **we need to be aware of our feed shrink**. Shrink is something that your management can control and it doesn't cost much. It is almost unbelievable how much shrink we take on baled hay. Uncovered hay stored on the ground in stacks for 2 years can have as much 25-30% dry matter loss. Anything we can do to limit that is going to help us keep more money in our pocket. We need to add costs of grinding and some loss when we calculate our hay costs. Even if we figure that the hay is only worth \$60/T, taking 25% shrink on that means it really cost us \$80/T. Shrink also has an impact on silage, earlage, distillers, and even grain prices on your operation and all of those little things add up to be big numbers. If it means putting bales in rows instead of stacking, managing the bunks for less feed waste, buying a silage tarp and using it, covering the distillers, or using the scale on the feed wagon the way you should, you can at least do something to control the shrink. The fastest way to double your money is to fold it in half and put it back in your pocket. You already own the hay you baled or the silage you chopped so the best thing to do is to keep it stored well enough that you can feed almost every pound.

Remember that **feeding an ionophore has huge implications on your feed conversions**. While some might be tempted to skip the supplement in order to eliminate the out-of-pocket cost, the drag on feed efficiency and gain is going to hurt. Rumensin and Bovatec help you get more out of your own homegrown feed. And if you are short on protein, skipping your protein supplement will show up in your calf performance too. Having fewer pounds to sell when calves are worth less this year than last is not going to help increase your revenue stream. We need more pounds in this scenario. Protein, ionophores, and a balanced, least cost ration help you generate more pounds. A quality supplement provides the required mineral and vitamins necessary for optimum calf health and performance and an ionophore helps protect against coccidiosis.

It has been said a number of times that **calf health is the single biggest wild card when it comes to predicting profitability**. Now is not the time to test out your vaccine protocol to see if you can skip some shots. Nor is it the time to skip the starter program and see if you can get by without it. An ounce of prevention is worth

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a pound of cure. These protocols work for a reason. Their return on investment might be difficult to measure, but not to justify. Everyone knows what a dead calf is worth and good nutrition accompanied by a quality vaccination program keeps those calves from showing up in the dead pile.

Marketing is something that many of us raising and feeding cattle are not very good at or interested in. We are good at calving out cows, working the cattle, mixing feed, getting it in the bunk at the right time, and finding and treating the sick calves. But **marketing is something that we don't have a choice of doing or not doing**. At some point, we will have to sell some calves. Getting the best price is what we struggle with. If marketing isn't something that someone in your operation has aptitude for, find someone to help you make the important marketing decisions. It may take you out of your comfort zone, but we need to do the \$100/hr jobs first when we are the owner of the operation and marketing is definitely that job. Fixing fence is important too, but that is the \$15/hr job.

With current markets and ag policy, land values and cash rental rates might have to drop for producers to continue to breakeven. A report from Rabobank estimates that we need to take at least 3 million acres out of crop production and back to grass in the next 3 years to help stabilize commodity prices. Some land in our region should probably be first in that conversion. As a livestock *and* crop producer, that decision could be a good move to do sooner rather than later.

No doubt about it, attitude is important. But, by controlling the things that we can, managing our feed and feeding, and stepping up our marketing, we can make it through challenging times.

*Rexanne Knock, PhD*

**STRESS CARE:** Starting calves this time of year is a very critical point in their lives. Make sure calves have adequate access to clean water (at least 1 linear inch of water space per head), get a balanced and palatable starter ration with the right feed additives and medication, use a good vaccination program, and be mindful of working the calves up on intake. The Stress Care starter products are designed specifically for getting calves off to a good start. If it takes you a while to get all of the calves in or bought, make sure the last group has a minimum of 14 days on the Stress Care program to get them a good start. Calves never get over a bad start.

### **Things to be thinking about:**

- \***Order your Stress Care for weaning-** planning ahead will help ensure you have it when you need it!
  - \*Continue **creep feed** for your spring born calves or consider switching to Ration Manager
  - \*Get your fall vaccination protocol or receiving protocol set with your veterinarian
  - \*Clean water tanks prior to weaning, check pens and perform maintenance
  - \*Feed *Altosid* to control horn fly populations until the first frost
  - \*Get mineral out to the cattle since forages are deficient in many trace minerals
  - \*Talk to your veterinarian about ultrasounding or pregnancy checking your replacement heifers
  - \*Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly
  - \*Get 30-13 tubs for protein supplementation when grazing crop residue
- \* Prepare for the upcoming Veterinary Feed Directive by talking with your feed representative and your vet!! Rules take effect January 1, 2017!!**