



# ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

December 15, 2017

## Bunk Management Still Key

The last 2 months have been challenging for feeding cattle. The daily temperatures swinging from 10 to near 70 degrees are less than ideal for starting and feeding calves. Hopefully the weather will be more cooperative from here on out. Still, a couple of reminders for managing the cattle could help you save a few.

### In a Nutshell

- \* Bloat can be free-gas bloat or frothy bloat
- \* Poor quality roughage and sorting can cause bloat
- \* Make sure you aren't too far behind the cattle on intake
- \* Consider how your roughage is processed
- \* Respiratory disease can occasionally cause bloat
- \* Increasing Rumensin can often help control bloat

**Bloats have been far too common this fall** and a variety of things occurred together to make that more of a problem. There are two kinds of bloat, a free-gas bloat and a frothy or foamy bloat. In a free-gas bloat, if you pass a stomach tube, you will release a bunch of gas and relieve the rumen tension almost immediately. If you have a foamy bloat and pass a stomach tube, you may get a little bit of frothy rumen digesta, but likely have a hard time even getting that. When a frothy bloat occurs, the animal cannot belch or eructate off the gas. Free gas in the rumen typically causes the animal to move the gas forward to belch out. If foamy bloat triggered belching, the animal would drown itself because the gas from the rumen is redirected to the lungs *before* it is fully exhaled. If you have an animal with a foamy or frothy bloat, passing some liquid laundry detergent down the stomach tube can help destabilize the foam so the animal can safely eructate some of it off. When bloat occurs, there are 3 factors that need to be considered: feed factors, microbial factors, and animal factors.

One of the feed factors that has been contributing this year is the poor quality roughage. Typically poor quality roughage by itself is not a factor in bloat, but in a mixed ration, **calves can sort out the stems and coarse particles resulting in bloat** due to inconsistent intake of the grain or energy portion of the ration. There may be some scattered stems left in the bunk giving you the appearance that the bunks aren't completely cleaned out when we are actually behind the cattle on intake and need to move them up on feed delivery. When there is scattered *ration* left in the bunk and not just the poor quality stuff, then we know we have caught the cattle on intake. If you look at the cattle multiple times between feedings, you will be able to notice if they are sorting the ration and pushing the roughage to the sides to let the goodies fall to the bottom. Also, if the cattle consistently have the bunk cleaned in short order where you first start unloading feed, it is likely a signal that you are behind on intakes. Having cattle charge the bunk and overeat is a big contributing factor to bloat.

**Another feed factor to consider is how the roughage is processed.** Even a small amount of high quality alfalfa that is finely ground can cause bloat. Using a larger screen at grinding in that case is preferable. If you have poor quality roughage, we need to put that through a smaller screen to try to avoid sorting. Changing screens doesn't happen all the time and so making sure quantities in the ration allow it to hold together and watching moisture in the ration becomes more important. Sometimes using multiple roughage sources helps prevent cattle from sorting. Keep your forages in separate piles at grinding time whenever possible so we can adjust if necessary.

Once you have cattle start bloating, it is often difficult to stop. Part of the reason for this is the fact that the microbial population of the rumen shifts after bloat resulting in a rumen population more acclimated to produce the mucin that helps stabilize a foamy bloat. Inadequate saliva production is also part of the problem. When cattle

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## BUNK MANAGEMENT STILL KEY

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charge the bunk and eat too fast, there is less saliva produced. The saliva contains enzymes that help destabilize the foam in the rumen so a reduction in saliva is not desirable.

Animal factors are another piece of the puzzle. **Respiratory disease can sometimes be involved in causing bloats.** If the lymph nodes in the throat are swollen, it can result in the cattle physically not being able to belch. In that case, talk with your vet about treatment of respiratory disease. Using a pulse dose of Aureomycin may be warranted. Sometimes nerve damage can cause cattle to be chronic bloaters. If the nerve controlling the rumen is damaged and not sending the signal to contract, then the animal becomes a chronic bloater and having a hole in the side is about the only way to fix that.

The weather has wreaked havoc on intakes this fall. Bunk management is very important to helping keep cattle healthy and gaining. **Being disciplined in increasing the cattle** and making them clean up the same amount of feed for 2-3 days in a row can help avoid the roller coaster on intakes. It really does take discipline because having cattle act hungry isn't fun. But, it also is not fun to have about ½ of the feed left in the bunk the next morning because you moved them up too far and too fast.

One thing we can do in the event of bloat is to **increase the level of Rumensin** we are feeding the cattle. By increasing the concentration of Rumensin in the ration, we help to level off the intakes of the cattle and keep them eating more consistently. Make sure you talk to your feed consultant about how much you should increase. We can also watch moisture in the ration and make sure that it is wet enough to hold together and prevent sorting.

*Roxanne Knock, PhD*

**\*\*\* Special Note\*\*\*** Some of you may have heard rumblings about feed prices going up. The vitamins that we use have gone through a wild increase due to a couple of unforeseen events. First, a vitamin precursor plant had a significant fire and will be closed for repairs estimated to take until the second quarter of 2018 to fix. The other factor is that China has closed some plants for updates to meet more stringent environmental standards. Together, they mean some ingredients we use to make your feed have gone up 10x. We are examining everything we can to make sure that you continue to get the nutrition you have in the past while making the best use of every pound we will be able to get our hands on. We are primarily concerned with vitamin A, D and E for the mineral season. While it is true that if you pull these vitamins out of your supplement that you will not notice a difference tomorrow, it doesn't change the fact that the cattle still need these vitamins. You will notice it at calving time when you have more scours and more sickness because of poor colostrum deficient in Vitamin A and E and the again in the fall when you have poor breed back on the cow herd. This is the worst possible timing for much of the area that suffered from early drought because the cows were not able to build up reserves of vitamin A and E like they generally can during the spring and early summer months. Overall, we are looking at a couple of pennies per head per day increase on mineral. We don't put it in your products if you don't need it and benefit from it. We plan to continue providing the best quality nutrition we can.

### **Timely Tips:**

- \* Remember to HEAT TAPE lines on liquid systems- this keeps the line fluid. C&R Supply has videos on how to maintain the John Blue pumps at <http://www.crsupply.com/index.php/products/liquid-feed/>
- \* Get **30-13 tubs** for grazing corn stalk residue
- \* Implant calves during backgrounding to get the best gain and efficiency
- \* Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly
- \* Pregnancy check cows and decide on a strategy to sell or feed them- implant them if you decide to fatten them