

Stewards of Plenty: 2015 SD Feedlot Tour

BROOKINGS, S.D. - Most people probably think feedlots are only about feeding cattle to provide beef for our dinner tables. During a recent SDSU Extension Feedlot Tour, attendees learned how some feedyard owners are more than just cattle feeders.

"Although cattle feeding is a tiny part of the daily routine for modern feeders; attention to cattle care and comfort was also a focus within the four feedlots included on this tour," explained Heidi Carroll, SDSU Extension Livestock Stewardship Associate.

The July 14, 2015 feedyards tour included visits to the following South Dakota

feedyards; Redstone Feeders of Iroquois, Warkenthien Feedyard of Clark, Moes Feedlot LLC of Florence, and J & J Farms of Bruce.

Below, Carroll, along with Warren Rusche, SDSU Extension Cow/Calf Field Specialist and Reid McDaniel, SDSU Extension Beef Feedlot Specialist, outline the unique features highlighted during the tours.

Health and comfort

A unique feature of Moes' Feedlot is that the bars above the bunk line can be adjusted to three different heights to accommodate feeding cattle of various sizes; from 200 pound calves up to market ready animals.

Animal health is a key

component to every feedyard. As McDaniel explained, communication between the ranch and feedyard allows managers to do a better job of tailoring vaccination protocols to match the health status of incoming calves. This better allows managers to carefully use antibiotics to treat calves when they get sick.

"Redstone Feeders communicates with their suppliers to design vaccination protocols on the ranch which has resulted in less sickness and death loss at the feedyard," McDaniel said.

John Moes, manager of Moes Feedlot LLC, also stressed the importance of cleaning waterers to prevent sick animals and to encourage adequate water intake, "If you wouldn't drink from it, neither will the calves," Moes said.

Because cattle comfort is challenged by the weather, sprinkler systems for open lots were utilized by several feedlots to assist in cooling the cattle during times of heat stress. Additionally, wind blocks were incorporated into open lots to protect cattle from cold winter



winds.

Pen Maintenance

"Special attention to pen maintenance is key to cleaner, healthier animals," Rusche said.

The Warkenthien Feedyard tour showcased three types of pens: bed-pack hoop barns, open concrete pens, and open dirt with concrete apron pens scraping manure, maintaining dirt mounds, and adding bedding

is an art when the weather constantly changes.

At Redstone and Moes, the monoslope pens are cleaned and bedded about one to two times per week. While J & J Farms have all dirt lots which require regular pen scraping and maintenance of proper slope to allow water drainage in order to reduce mud hole formation.

"Each pen type requires

attention to detail and lots of hours of hard work to ensure a dry, comfortable environment in which the cattle live," Carroll said. "These practices minimize disease pathogens, promote good cattle health which can lead to fewer foot problems or sick cattle, and increase

■ TOUR,
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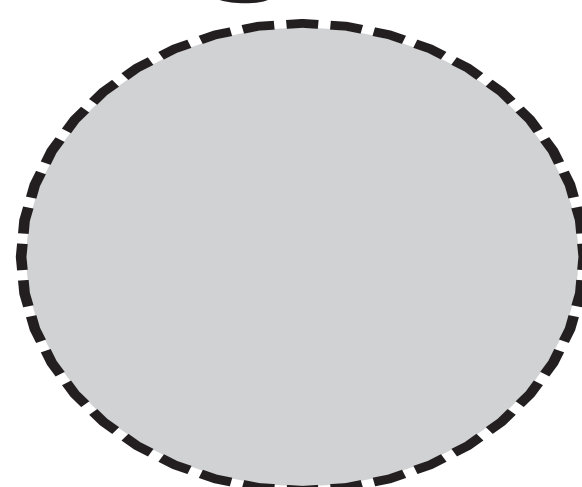
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