Cattle sickness behavior complex

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**Grasp Firmly. Then Apply Science.**

**March Feedyard Analysis**

**Weather increases production costs**

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DIVERSE feeding conditions this past winter continued to affect cattle performance and increased production costs.

Compared to the previous month, daily gains were reduced, while feed conversions and costs of gain were higher.

Feedyard managers reported a wide range in gain costs for both steers and heifers as well as among locations. Costs of gain ranged from 573 to 585/cwt., with feedyards that received the most moisture and coldest temperatures reporting the highest costs.

Steers were placed on feed at 752 lb., marketed at 1,169 lb. and gained 3.29 lb. daily for the 156-day feeding period. The cost of gain was $86.40/cwt. up 51.25 cwt. from February.

Cattle feeders reported profits of 565-85 per head with a 596 cwt. cattle market. A year ago, feeders reported losses of 578-190 per head with an 833 cwt. cattle market. Cattle feeders also reported profitable results with a recent rise in the feeder cattle market. Steers weighing 500 lb. were marketed in the $120-125/cwt. range versus the $105-110/cwt. range one year ago. The cost of rations for April will range from $230 to $240 per ton on a dry basis with a ration margin.

Ration costs should be comparable to the previous month, with corn priced at $5.06-8.00/cwt. and alfalfa hay priced at $120-140 per ton.

Feedyard showlists were excellent as farmers worked intensively to move cattle to market.

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**Other factors can be major contributors to sickness behavior as well.**

Severe injection-site reactions can make cattle reluctant to enter the feedlot or to water when other animals are present. This is an avoidance mechanism due to the pain response at the injection site, particularly in the neck region.

The age at weaning may influence the sickness behavior response because six-month-old beef calves respond more aggressively, as evidenced by higher feed conversions, than 80-day-old calves do, thus making the older calf more susceptible to subsequent health issues (Carroll, 2009).

Stacking onto this elevated state of pro-inflammatory response are the effects of transportation and related injuries and pain-inducing management procedures such as castration and dehorning (Mitchell, 1988; Hart, 1988; Stanger, 2003; Rust, 2007).

Recent evidence suggests that receiving calves may also contribute to a pro-inflammatory state as elevated inflammatory-phase proteins have been associated with increasing energy in rations and modulation by the use of omega-3 fatty acids (Alexander, 1998; Duff and Galeyean, 2007; Colburn et al., 2000).

A great deal is continuously being brought to the cattle to market.

**References**


