



Cattle feedlot treatment guide

**A guide to the management and treatment
of sick animals in South-East Asian feedlots**

About this guide

Maintaining animal health and welfare conditions in the feedlot is critical to the success and profitability of the enterprise. This guide identifies key management techniques that can assist feedlot staff to maximise the performance of Australian animals in South-East Asian feedlots including simple techniques for examining and observing cattle at arrival and treatment plans for common issues such as non-eaters, lameness, diarrhoea, fever, transit tetany, ephemeral fever, abscess or swelling, dead tails and downers.

Note: This is a field guide complements the Manual for South-East Asian Cattle Feedlots. Animal welfare is a priority for the livestock export industry and the prompt care and treatment of animals is seen as essential to achieve this. The images in this manual are guides only. The responsibility for the welfare of the animals resides with the person in charge of the animal.

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Cattle feedlot treatment guide

This guide:

- helps you make a quick initial diagnosis of a sick animal
- describes the cause; and
- recommends an immediate treatment

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Examining cattle

Observe each animal carefully.

Check on arrival at the feedlot:

- is its gut empty or full?
- is it dehydrated?
- weigh it
- identify with a new ear tag
- record information on a record card or computer

Check every animal, every pen, every day:

- how is it breathing – steady or heavy?
- how is it standing – lame or poorly coordinated?
- what is its attitude – depressed or excited?
- are its faeces too liquid or too firm?
- are there any abscesses or swellings – damage to tail?

If an animal is sick, make a quick decision—treat it, or sell to slaughter.

If the decision is to treat the animal, move it to the sick pen, and check why the stockman selected this animal.

Take its temperature and observe the animal carefully.

Sick pen and recovery pen

The sick pen

A comfortable sick pen will speed up recovery.

The sick pen should have:

- good shelter and shade
- low stocking density
- deep bedding changed frequently

It should be close to the crush for easy returns for treatment.

Check each sick animal at least every three days. If there is no major recovery after nine days, consider slaughter.

When no further treatment is needed, send the animal to the recovery pen.

The recovery pen

Stock lightly and feed a highly palatable ration to continue rapid recovery.

Make sure the animal is fully recovered before returning it to a production pen.

Return the animal to a group of similar class and weight.

Do not return it to its original group which will be significantly heavier.

Green chop is the best medicine.

Non-eater



Non-eater

Cause

The animal may be not eating for a range of possible reasons.

Consider is it

- stress
- injury
- diarrhoea or gut infection
- dietary change
- another disease?

Signs

Thin and weak body, depressed attitude.

Treatment

Depends on the cause

If stress (with no fever)

- cortisone/dexamethasone
- vitamins
- green chop

If due to change in diet:

- change back to high-fibre green chop
- then gradually return to the original diet over two weeks

If due to injury or other disease:

- treat injury or disease as required
- feed green chop



Lameness



Lameness

Cause

There can be many causes of lameness. The most common being trauma and infections of the hoof and lower leg.

Signs

Observe the animal walking. Look for signs of lameness and for swellings or wounds on feet and legs.

Treatment

If the skin is broken and/or fever present:

- antibiotics – penicillin is usually best
- anti-inflammatory (tolfidine or flunixin) to reduce pain and inflammation

Apply a topical wound treatment if the skin is broken to protect from flies.

Make sure there is deep bedding in the sick pen and room for animal to lie down for long periods.

Feed green chop to encourage appetite.

Diarrhoea



Diarrhoea

Cause

A range of factors can cause diarrhoea including:

- sudden change in diet
- metabolic upset
- bacterial, viral or parasitic infection

Signs

Diarrhoea with no sign of illness is probably just a normal, short-term effect from a change in the ration. No treatment is needed.

Diarrhoea with other signs of illness requires treatment.

These signs include:

- depression
- reduced appetite
- fever
- dehydration
- bloody and smelly faeces

Treatment

- antibiotics – sulpha and trimethoprim
- anti-inflammatory if fever is present
- vitamins
- green chop

Fever



Fever

Cause

- any viral or bacterial infection can cause fever

Signs

- a temperature higher than 39.5°C
- animal is weak, lethargic and depressed and not interested in feed

Treatment

Treat all cases of fever with:

- antibiotic to fight infection plus
- an anti-inflammatory to reduce temperature, pain and inflammation

Do not treat with cortisone/dexamethasone

If caused **by pneumonia**, use:

- oxytetracycline plus tolfidine or flunixin

If caused **by lameness**, use:

- penicillin plus tolfidine or flunixin

If caused **by diarrhoea/gut infection**, use:

- sulpha and trimethoprim plus flunixin

Treat animal and then examine again at three, six and nine days if necessary.

If, after nine days, the animal is not responding to treatment, it is probably best to slaughter.

Transit tetany



Transit tetany

Cause

Transit tetany is usually seen in older cattle on arrival at the feedlot after a long stressful truck trip. It is caused by a drop in calcium and magnesium levels in the blood.

Signs

- uncoordinated gait
- aggressive behaviour and bellowing
- exhaustion
- then collapse

Treatment

- immediate infusion of calcium/magnesium such as Calcigol
- Cortisone/dexamethasone
- give undisturbed rest

Ephemeral fever



Ephemeral fever

Cause

Also known as 'three-day sickness' caused by a viral infection spread by midges.

Ephemeral fever can be prevented by vaccination.

Signs

The animal lies down for about three days, shows a fever, and has painful joints.

As the virus is spread by midges, it may affect many animals at the same time.

Treatment

- anti-inflammatory to reduce fever and pain
- antibiotic to prevent pneumonia (oxytetracycline is best)
- allow rest

Abscess or swelling



Abscess or swelling

Cause

Abscesses are caused by bacterial infection through an open wound or injury. Swellings that are not infected are usually caused by trauma.

Signs

Swellings or lumps under the skin. Open wounds with bloody or pus discharge.

Treatment

Is the swelling infected?

- check the animal's temperature
- aspirate swelling with a syringe to identify contents

If the contents indicate pus and infection:

- lance and drain
- treat with antibiotics (penicillin is usually best)
- give anti-inflammatory for pain relief
- apply topical treatment for fly control

If the content is only blood:

- do not lance
- treat with anti-inflammatory if there is pain

'Dead tails'



‘Dead tails’

Cause

Damage to tails is caused by traumatic injury such as being trodden on by other animals. It also might indicate that the animal lies down excessively because of sickness or that the pen is overcrowded.

Signs

Look for visible signs of damaged or dead tail when the animal cannot move its tail.

Treatment

If the tail is severely injured, amputate to speed recovery:

- Cut off above the dead area.
- Clean wound and apply bandage and fly control ointment.
- Treat with antibiotics (oxytetracycline) and anti-inflammatory at time of amputation and again after three days.

Downers



Downers

Cause

There can be many causes of downer animals.

An animal may go down and be unable to stand because of:

- severe injury
- exhaustion
- bovine ephemeral fever
- metabolic upset
- late pregnancy in cows

Signs

The animal is unable to rise.

Treatment

- Treat according to the cause.
- Always consider using antibiotics and dexamethosone or an anti-inflammatory.
- Allow animals with ephemeral fever three days to recover.
- If the problem has another cause and the animal cannot rise after 24 hours, it might be best to slaughter.

Drugs and drug doses



From l - r: *Tolfidine* (anti-inflammatory); antibiotic (sulpha and trimethoprim); antibiotic (oxytetracycline)

Drugs and drug doses

The cost of drugs is low compared to the value of returning a sick animal to full health and production.

Use drugs correctly

Ensure the correct use of drugs by:

- using the most appropriate drug for the problem
- using the recommended dose and frequency of treatment
- preferring long-acting drugs to reduce the stress of multiple visits to the crush

Doses

Oxtetracycline – 1 ml per 10kg
(Spread dose over several injection sites in the neck as it is quite painful)

Penicillin – 6ml per 100kg

Tolfidine – 2ml per 45kg

Flunixin – 2ml per 45kg

Sulpha and trimethoprim – 6ml per 100 kg

Dexamethasone – 1ml per 100kg

If possible, give all injections in the neck muscle, to reduce spoiling the more valuable cuts of the rump.



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