



Beef industry

guidelines for feeding travelling cattle

Background

Animal welfare has become an important issue for all sectors of the cattle industry. Attention to animal welfare is critical in maintaining a positive industry image and in meeting the legal requirements for the sale and transport of livestock.

Queensland's animal welfare legislation (the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*) places a **duty of care** on all people in charge of animals. This means providing for the needs of animals in a way that is appropriate, and includes the provision of suitable food, water, handling facilities and yards.

The definition of a **person in charge** under the Act includes the owner, representatives of the owner, or any person with custody of the animal/s.

This places a legal requirement on producers, transporters, saleyard superintendents/agents, spelling establishment operators and processors to ensure the welfare of cattle throughout the supply chain.

The Act also recognises codes of practice as agreed standards of animal welfare for the various livestock species and types of animal use.

The following feeding guidelines for cattle held over in saleyards, spelling centres or transit centres should be read in conjunction with the relevant codes of practice.

Feeding recommendations

It is recommended that cattle spelled in saleyards, spelling centres or transit centres be fed at the **travelling cattle rate** (outlined overleaf) for each 24 hours they are at the facility.

This is put in practice by:

- feeding cattle that arrive prior to 12 noon on the day prior to a sale (except where they have travelled short distances and have had no prior curfew)
- feeding cattle to be held for at least 24 hours after completion of the sale of the last pen—feeding should not commence until the entire consignment has been delivered to the purchaser's pen, to ensure all cattle gain equal access to appropriate feed
- feeding cattle that are held for 48 hours or more after the sale, in a manner agreed to by the owner of the cattle and the saleyard operator/contractor—however, the overall feeding rate should reflect the daily travelling cattle rate requirements
- feeding cattle in transit centres where spelling is required in line with the maximum travel times outlined in the *Model Code of Practice for the Land Transport of Cattle*.



Feeding rates

Normally, a ration of approximately 1.5% to 2% of body weight of reasonable quality hay (approximately 8% crude protein) will provide a maintenance ration.

The **travelling cattle rate** (outlined below) does **not** aim to provide a maintenance ration. It aims to provide sufficient feed to ensure the animal travels safely to its proposed destination, without compromising its welfare and ensuring its rumen continues to function effectively.



Table 1: Daily minimum feed intake for maintenance and for travelling cattle

Liveweight (kg)	Energy for maintenance (MJ ME/day)	Protein for maintenance (g/day)	Example Daily feed intake for maintenance on a diet of 8% protein and 7 MJ ME/kg	Required daily feed intake—travelling cattle rate (kg)
200	29	225	4.4 kg (2.2%)	2.2
300	38	295	5.4 kg (1.8%)	2.7
400	46	360	6.6 kg (1.65%)	3.3
500	54	420	7.7 kg (1.54%)	3.9
600	61	475	8.7 kg (1.45%)	4.4

Table 2: Indicative bale weights and feeding rates for travelling cattle

Liveweight (kg)	Hay (bale) feeding per day per 20 head travelling cattle			
	Small square bales		Round bales	
	Lucerne (25 kg)	Grass hay (20 kg)	4 ft (250 kg)	5 ft (330 kg)
200	2	3	.2	.15
300	2.5	4	.25	.2
400	3	5	.3	.23
500	3.5	6	.35	.26
600	4	6.5	.4	.3

Things to remember

- As bale weights can vary significantly, a sample of the hay bales should be weighed to calculate an accurate feeding rate.
- The hay **must** be palatable to the stock and should be of a reasonable quality (e.g. suggested minimum of 8% crude protein). If the hay is of a lesser quality, feeding rates should be adjusted accordingly. Poor quality hay is usually not palatable, has little nutritional value and is unlikely to meet the aims of the feeding program.
- Strong consideration should also be given to feeding cattle in racks or bunks to limit the potential risk of chemical residues, parasite infestation, wastage of hay and fouling of yards.
- The above recommendations refer to cattle in a minimum strong store condition. Weakened or stressed animals may require additional feed to help cope with the added stress of transport. Feeding levels for this class of animal must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- These recommendations only refer to the short-term spelling of cattle. Where cattle are held for extended periods they must be fed a maintenance ration.