

# Animal welfare in beef feedlots

## Heat stress management

'Feedlotting' is the confinement of cattle in a yard or enclosure where they are fed high quality ration or forage until they reach an optimal weight for processing. Feedlot cattle are more prone to animal welfare risks such as heat stress.

In Queensland if more than 49 standard cattle units (a unit is equivalent to a 600kg beast) are confined, the feedlot must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

### Heat stress management

Heat stress occurs when an animal cannot effectively control body heat and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels. When heat stress occurs in feedlots it can lead to reduced feed intake, poor production and, if not adequately controlled, death.

There are a number of factors that can influence heat stress in feedlot cattle. These include:

- high humidity and air temperature over an extended period
- an accumulation of manure within the pen
- poor drainage and air circulation
- lack of effective shelter
- lack of options to reduce body temperature in the animal
- breed effect, with *Bos taurus* cattle recognised as more susceptible to heat stress.

Heat stress management requires a coordinated and planned approach to be effective.

### Mitigating the risk

The feedlot industry has undertaken significant research to better prepare feedlot enterprises to

manage heat stress. All feedlots should have a heat stress management plan in place.

The plan should include a review of all existing procedures and equipment for dealing with an excessive heat load event including:

- regular removal of manure
- diet changes to reduce metabolic heat produced during digestion
- more frequent water changes to ensure cool, good quality water is available at all times
- provision of additional shade and activation of additional cooling (irrigation) equipment
- trigger points for when to activate the plan; for example during periods of prolonged high temperature and humidity, or forecasted extreme weather conditions.

### More information

The National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS) requires all accredited feedlots to have a heat stress management plan in place. For more information on the NFAS, visit the Australian Lot Feeders Association website at [www.feedlots.com.au](http://www.feedlots.com.au) or call (02) 9290 3700.

Download a free booklet from Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) on tips and tools for managing heat load in feedlot cattle. Call MLA on 1800 023 100 or visit [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au).

Call Biosecurity Queensland on 13 23 25 or visit [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) for more information.



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