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What to Do in Times of Limited or No Market Outlet

We have been working with University of Illinois beef cattle researchers and Extension educators to help provide resources to help guide our producers through these unprecedented circumstances.

Managing Harvest-Ready Cattle During Packing Plant Slowdowns

1. What is happening?

- Cattle feeders are having to make difficult decisions and are facing increased costs to accommodate late marketing of live animals unable to be marketed at targeted dates due to packing plant closures and slowdowns.

2. Changes may need to be made to normal marketing practices.

- Feeders need to actively engage in conversations with cattle buyers to market cattle as soon as possible.
- Feeders need to actively look at opportunities to send cattle to processors farther away.

3. Weigh and grade cattle to allow for sorting.

- Identify cattle that need to be marketed as soon as possible.
 - Cattle that are at risk of heavy carcass discounts.
 - Cattle that may be at risk of yield grade discounts
 - Cattle that may be at risk of lameness due to heavier weights.
- Identify cattle within pens that can be fed longer without major discount.

4. Identify roughage sources that can decrease energy density of the diet to slow weight gain.

- Roughage sources can include, but are not limited to corn silage, hay silage, small grains silages, hay, cornstalks, soybean hulls.
- If roughage sources are not available from on farm feed stores, look at sourcing and purchasing low-cost roughages.

5. Utilize a nutritionist to amend diets to accommodate slower average daily gains.

- Diet changes need to be made based on cattle weight, grade and marketing date.
- Diet changes need to be formulated for target gains that allow an extended marketing window.
- Diet changes need to be subtle to avoid bloat and rumen upset.
- Potential options may include:
 - Return cattle to the previous step-up diet.
 - Double or triple the roughage component of the ration.
 - If a minimum of 24 inches of bunk space is available, limit feeding may be an option.
 - If cattle are on a self-feeder, adding salt or additional salt can help limit intake.

6. Reduce diet cost.

- Removal of feed additives, besides Monensin.

- Removal of additional crude protein supplementation that adds cost.
- Utilize lower cost mineral supplements.

7. *Continue to utilize BQA management practices.*

- Handle cattle in a low-stress manner.
- Be patient and allow more time for excessively heavy animals to negotiate and navigate sorting and working facilities.
- Be aware that excessively heavy cattle may be oversized for gate openings, loadouts, and other facilities. Use caution to avoid animal injury or bruising.
- Prepare a plan to better manage heat stress. Excessively heavy cattle handle heat poorly and may require more attention during hot weather.
- Monitor cattle closely to ensure diet changes are not causing rumen upset or bloat.
- Always involve your nutritionist, veterinarian, and cattle feeding team in changes to rations and management strategy.

8. *If extended periods of holding cattle in a maintenance pattern presents animal welfare concerns, contact the Illinois Beef Association office to inform Jill Johnson, Executive Vice President, by telephoning (217) 787-4280 or emailing jill@illinoisbeef.com so the IBA can provide additional resources.*

- Secure a DUNS Numbers and a SAM registration. A DUNS number is required in the event government compensation for euthanized cattle is sought. A DUNS number can be obtained online by accessing GOVT@dnb.com. A DUNS number must be obtained before the euthanasia/disposal event occurs. To receive government financial assistance the operation must be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM).
- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to livestock producers for animal mortality disposal, resulting from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Producers facing livestock depopulation are encouraged to file the EQIP application (Form CCC-1200) with their [local NRCS field office](#), available beginning today. You must work through your NRCS office for this process.
- Secure a Premises Registration number from the IDOA by accessing online <http://bit.ly/PremID2020> before the event occurs. A Premises Identification is required before the event occurs if government financial assistance (EQIP funding) or indemnity payments are sought.