



FEEDLOT FACT SHEET

PURPOSE

The purpose of feedlots is to feed cattle to grow and gain important body fat and muscle over a period of approximately four months, with a target weight of around 1400 pounds or 635 kilograms. Cattle are kept in a dry lot for three to five months with about 80 head per pen with an allocation of 250 to 300 square feet per head. They are also provided with a high and dry area to rest when weather conditions are wet and muddy.

WHAT DO CATTLE FEEDERS DO?

- Feed cattle with a focus on animal health, nutrition, and well being
- Feed for specific markets like North America and Europe
- Obtain a variety of weights and classes of cattle to support the entire cow calf and yearling industries
- Buy feed grain and co-product from a variety of sources

FACTS

Alberta joined Confederation on September 1, 1905. In 1911, the first census year in which the province of Alberta was included, there were 739,725 cattle. In 2016, agricultural producers reported 5.2 million cattle, seven times more than in 1911.

Alberta is Canada's largest beef producing province and has:

- 149 feedlots (of 1,000 head or more)
- 1.6 million head annual output
- 69% of Canada's fed cattle production
- 4.9 million beef cattle - 41.6% of the national herd
- Alberta's feeder cattle (steers and heifers for feeding or slaughter) accounted for 59.6% of the national total
- Alberta's beef breeding stock (beef cows and heifers for beef herd replacement) accounted for 42.3%
- For the first time since the 2001 Census, Alberta reported an increase in the number of beef cattle (beef cattle for breeding and beef cattle for

feeding/slaughter). This contrasted with the continued decline at the national level (-2.4%)

- Alberta's beef cattle inventories rose 1.3% from 2011 to 3.34 million head — despite fewer farms (-9.0%) reporting beef cattle.
- Being close to processing capacity and availability of feed and pasture land provide Alberta's beef sector with a comparative advantage over other provinces

ALBERTA'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

- Key to the success of Alberta's cattle feeding sector is the sheer number of feedlots, their combined capacity, and a diverse range of feedlot sizes. Although they represent the largest feedlots in Canada, many are still family-owned farms with three generations working on them.
- Alberta's feedlots are located close to the country's largest processors and meat packers — **80% of Canada's processed cattle are located in Alberta.**
- The feedlot is the most intensive component of the beef production chain because this is where the final stage of the process occurs and where a significant portion of value is added.

Additional competitive advantage is offered through:

- Alberta's sizeable land base
- Moderate climate
- Ample and economical supplies of forage and feed grains
- World-class irrigation system

FINISHING DIET

The finishing diet consists of a very precise grain-based ration to ensure a balance of health, growth, and meat quality. This diet is an 85% grain (mainly barley in Alberta) diet, with 20% comprised of forages — silage and hay. However, cattle that enter the feedlot are not immediately put on such a concentrated diet, but are gradually fed this combination over a two-week timeframe. Pens are kept clean and the health and welfare of the animals is a top priority.

HEALTH MONITORING

Cattle in the pens are checked daily for signs of illness, distress, and injury. These animals are immediately separated and diagnosed, then treated by a veterinarian or by the yard manager, depending on the issue.

Weight gain and feed intake require diligent monitoring as they determine readiness for processing. Once a group of animals has reached its target weight and size, it's moved out of the pen and loaded onto cattle liners bound for the processing facility.