

Feedlot Cost of Gain Assessment

This is an assessment tool to identify areas of improvement in a feedlot operation to improve cost of gain. These are general recommendations for the average producer and results may differ slightly depending on size of operation and resources. Therefore, it is recommended producers work with UW Extension agent, nutritionist, or other feedlot professionals to identify specific areas of improvement, which best fit a producer's situation.

Instructions: Answer each question and place score in right-hand column. Total the score from the questions to determine how your feedlot operation ranks in maximizing cost of gain.

Question	High Cost of Gain (1 pt)	Average Cost of Gain (3 pts)	Low Cost of Gain (5 pts)
1. When do you inventory your feed supplies?	Not until the cattle are bought	Late summer or shortly before cattle are bought	Monitor throughout the year
2. When do you determine the ingredients in your ration?	We always feed the same ration	Every few years or when corn prices rise	Throughout the year to determine costs and select least cost rations
3. How often do you sample feed for nutrient composition or DM?	Never	1 time per year	1-2 time per month
4. How do you determine how much to feed each day?	We feed as much as they will eat in a self feeder	We feed as much as they will eat in a bunk	We feed to have a clean bunk before feeding 50% of the time
5. What is the source of most of your feed?	Purchased when needed at commodity prices	Contract as needed	Mostly home-grown
6. How do you store your ensiled feeds?	In an uncovered pile or bunker	In a silo or harvester, or bag, not well packed or filled completely	Well-packed, covered bunker or bag
7. What portion of your ration are by-products?	0%	1-30%	>30%
8. How is your corn processed in your ration?	Whole shelled corn	Cracked or ground corn	High moisture corn
9. How are your forages processed for your ration?	For hay: Not at all, feed round or small squares For silages: Coarsely chopped (Large to medium pieces of cob)	For hay: Chopped coarse to medium For silage: Chopped coarse to medium	For hay: Chopped medium to fine For silage: Chopped medium to fine through a processor
10. What growth promoters do you use?	None	Low potency implant	Medium to high potency implants and/or beta anagonists
11. What porportion of forage is in your finishing ration on DM basis?	>50%	50-20%	<20%
12. How do you store your dry feed grain and supplement?	In a pile	Covered pile; timed delivery and usage	Stored in bin or bagged
13. What equipment do you have for feeding your cattle?	Hand-fed or self-feeder	Tractor, loader, with ingredients fed separately	Tractor, feeder/mixer wagon to feed totally mixed ration
14. What is the average mortality rate in a group of cattle?	>5%	2-5%	<2%
15. How do you group your calves?	All fed in the same pen and/or cattle added throughout the year as purchased	Purchased and feed as one group from start to finish	Sort cattle into outcome groups
Total Score	<25 Reevaluate your management and feeding strategies	26-50 Good job, but need some improvement	>51 Excellent job, just need to fine tune