DECEMBER 2023: ON FEED

Dakotaland Feeds, LLC

A NEWSLETTER OF DAKOTALAND FEEDS

Bunk Management Still Key

In a Nutshell:

- **Feed, microbial, and animal factors all influence bloat**
- **Feed factors can include particle size or digestibility**
- **Microbial populations shift after an incidence of bloat**
- **Respiratory disease may contribute to bloat**
- **Bloats can be either free-gas or frothy**
- **Rate of consumption can cause bloat**
- **Increasing Rumensin may be an option**
- **Bunk management is still key to preventing bloat**

When bloat occurs, there are 3 factors that need to be considered: feed factors, microbial factors, and animal factors. Any of these 3 factors or a combination of them may be involved in any particular instance of bloat.

Feed factors can include particle size and digestibility, especially that of alfalfa. Smaller particles of hay or grains are more rapidly digestible than larger particles. Adjusting this may mean putting in a larger screen when you grind hay. It could also mean switching to a portion of whole or lightly cracked corn instead of solely ground corn. Grain is more rapidly digestible than grass hay. This means that the grain is more likely to cause bloat. The moisture of the ration can also be problematic due to dry rations having a tendency to get sorted by the calves, meaning they eat the more rapidly digestible feed first and leave the hay, resulting in bloat. If we adjust ingredients to increase moisture in the ration by feeding more wet feeds or adding water, generally it is more difficult for calves to pick out the ingredients they want to eat, helping us to reduce bloat.

Once you have cattle that have bloated, it is often difficult to stop. Part of the reason for this is the fact that the **microbial population of the rumen shifts after bloat,** resulting in a rumen population more acclimated to produce the mucin that helps stabilize a foamy bloat. Inadequate saliva production is also part of the problem. When cattle charge the bunk and eat too fast, there is less saliva produced. The saliva contains enzymes that help destabilize the foam in the rumen, so a reduction in saliva is not desirable.

Animal factors are another piece of the puzzle. **Respiratory disease can sometimes be involved in causing bloats**. If the lymph nodes in the throat are swollen, it can occasionally result in the cattle physically not being able to belch. In this case, talk with your vet about treatment of respiratory disease. Using a pulse dose of Aureomycin at 1 g per 100 lbs for 5 days may be warranted. Sometimes nerve damage can cause cattle to be chronic bloaters. If the nerve controlling the rumen is injured and not sending the signal to contract, then the animal becomes a chronic bloater, and using a trocar to maintain a hole in the rumen is about the only way to manage this.

There are two kinds of bloat: a free-gas bloat and a frothy bloat. In a free-gas bloat, if you pass a stomach tube, you will release gas and relieve the rumen tension almost immediately. If you have a foamy bloat and pass a stomach tube, you may have a bit of frothy rumen digesta come out, but will likely have a hard time even getting that. Free gas in the rumen typically causes the animal to move the gas forward to belch out. When a frothy bloat occurs, the animal cannot belch or eructate off the gas. If foamy bloat triggered belching, the animal would drown itself due to the gas from the rumen redirecting to the lungs before it is fully exhaled. If you have an animal with a foamy or frothy bloat, passing bloat treatment or liquid laundry detergent down the stomach tube can help destabilize the foam so the animal can begin to eructate some of it off. If the animal is having respiratory distress, you don't have time to let that work and will need to put a hole in their left side with either a knife or a trocar.

If we are behind the cattle on intake, **their rate of eating may be causing bloat.** If the bunks are slicked in a matter of hours, we need to increase the amount of feed delivered. If you are only feeding once per day and looking at the bunks once per day, you might be missing signs that calves are ready for more feed or realize just how long the bunks are empty. If you look at the cattle between feedings, you will notice if they are sorting the ration and pushing the roughage to the sides, letting the goodies fall to the bottom.

You should also notice if there are cattle with high sides, indicating bloat issues. If the cattle consistently have the bunk cleaned in short order where you first start unloading feed, it is likely a signal that you are behind on intakes. Having cattle charge the bunk and overeat is a big contributing factor to bloat.

One thing we can do in the event of bloat is to **increase the level of Rumensin** we are feeding the cattle. By increasing the concentration of Rumensin in the ration, we help to level off the intakes of the cattle and keep them eating more consistently. Be sure to talk to your feed consultant before doing this to see if it fits your situation.

Bunk management is very important to helping keep cattle healthy and gaining. **Being disciplined in increasing the cattle** and making them clean up the same amount of feed for 2-3 days in a row can help avoid the roller coaster on intakes. It requires discipline, because having cattle act hungry isn't fun. However, it is also not fun to have about ½ of the feed left in the bunk the next morning because you moved them up too far and too fast. If you are having issues, ask your feed consultant to help you troubleshoot. Small changes can make a big difference.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- Remember to recirculate your liquid supplements for 10 minutes daily
- Heat taping lines on liquid tanks will help keep the liquid fluid
- Get **30-13 tubs or 38-20 tubs** for grazing crop residue
- Implant calves during backgrounding to get the best gain and efficiency
- Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly
- Pregnancy check cows and decide on a strategy to sell or feed them—implant them if you decide to fatten them

TO RECEIVE THIS VIA EMAIL, PLEASE SEND REQUEST TO: ROXANNE@DAKOTALANDFEEDS.COM

Dakotaland Feeds, LLC

674 W Park Ave
Huron, SD 57350