



Feedyard
Management

In A Successful Feedyard... People Make The Difference

Ask any feedyard owner what makes his operation successful, and chances are he'll respond, "People! We're in a service business—servicing the customer and his cattle—so people are everything."

The typical custom feedyard with 30,000 head capacity will have around 27 employees—several of whom are specialists with specialized training. In addition, it will have three or four consultants.

Let's meet some of these people who are the employees of, say AAA Feedyard. Judge for yourself whether these are the

people to whom you would entrust your cattle.

Let's start with the **feedyard manager**. Usually, he is a college graduate with a degree in animal science, business administration or the equivalent. Because of his many and varied responsibilities, it's said that the feedyard manager must be a nutritionist, a veterinarian, a personnel manager, a public relations specialist, an accountant, a politician, an engineer, an environmentalist, a trainer, a cattle buyer, a marketer and an entrepreneur.

But most of all, he's a sharp businessman. In a very competitive business, he handles many thousand cattle, worth many million dollars, each year. So, with his customers in mind, he attempts to gain a competitive edge in three areas:

- buying cattle and feed,
- selling fed cattle, and
- least cost gain.

A major responsibility for the manager is to hire and supervise key personnel. He also must approve major expenditures, budgets and capital outlays; monitor cattle and their health care; monitor mill

operations for efficiency; quality and inventory control; coordinate nutritional and veterinary guidelines; and ensure the accuracy and integrity of all transactions. In many cases, the manager handles fed cattle sales for customers.

The **assistant manager**, like his boss, must have above-average knowledge of cattle, animal health and nutrition. And he must understand, motivate and supervise people.

In AAA Feedyard, the assistant manager is responsible for shipping and receiving cattle, directing feedyard repair and maintenance; monitoring bunk management, cattle movement and doctoring sick cattle; and selling fed cattle when the manager is away.

In some feedyards, the assistant manager is also the **bunk reader** or **bunk manager**. The bunk manager spends most of his time in the pickup, inspecting every feedbunk three or four times each day. He determines the ration and how much should be fed, and then orders it from the on-site feedmill.

He must have knowledge of how much the cattle should eat in relation to their body weight, when to move the cattle from one ration to another, etc. He monitors the feed delivery, (feed truck drivers) for timeliness and accuracy. And he watches for other things that might need immediate attention, such as loose bunk cables, muddy aprons, dirty water troughs, etc.

The **mill manager** ensures continuous ration availability and quality control. This requires strict inventory control and a preventive maintenance program so that the mill never is down for long. Typically, the mill manager will supervise three or four people, such as the **mill operator**, the **roll operator**, a **mill loader operator** and **maintenance people**.



A **feeder** (feed truck driver) is required for about each 10,000 to 15,000 head of cattle. At AAA Feedyard, all cattle are fed three times a day—on a schedule like you and I eat. But some feedyards, after cattle have been on feed for 30 to 60 days, move to twice-a-day feedings.

The feed truck driver meters out the correct ration and the correct amount, as specified by the bunk manager, and records it on a scale card for that pen, using an on-board, computerized scale in the cab of the truck. This information is used in determining how much feed that pen will receive the next day.

The **cattle foreman** or head cowboy is responsible for the cattle, and for hiring, training and supervising pen riders. He supervises all cattle movements and head counts—no easy task when moving several thousand head a week.

The **pen riders** spend practically all their time horseback, inspecting all cattle daily and recognizing sick cattle by early symptoms. Since one rider inspects 5,000 to 10,000 head per day, they become good at it.

Any sick cattle are removed from their pens, taken to hospital pens and the head counts recorded. Then, the pen rider returns hospital cattle to their home pen as soon as possible, again recording the head count.

The **head doctor** and his assistants are responsible for treating all sick cattle. Routine treatments

are prescribed by the consulting veterinarian, who is called in on some tough cases.

The head doctor also is responsible for purchase and inventory of medicines, follow-up treatment of animals and reporting to the head office all records of animals treated and medicines used.

Some feedyards contract with an outside crew to process incoming cattle. But at AAA Feedyard, the **processing crew** is on staff. They process all incoming cattle—vaccinate, implant, dehorn, castrate, brand or ear tag and treat as prescribed by the consulting veterinarian and nutritionist.

Back at the office, the **office manager** and **controller** supervise the office staff and keep the paperwork flowing. This includes, among other things, the usual accounting, commodity procurement, payroll, insurance, personnel, assistance with customer financing and mailing checks to customers.

In addition, custom feedyards usually have consultants on retainer. The **consulting veterinarian** prescribes medicines, treatment programs, trains the lay doctors and is on call when needed.

The **consulting nutritionist**, who often has a Ph.D. in animal nutrition, helps the feedyard get optimum performance from your cattle. For example, he determines energy levels of various rations, advises on available ingredients, feed prices, feed additives, does least-cost analysis and prescribes growth promotants.

Also, most feedyards utilize a **risk management specialist**, an **attorney** and a **CPA** — all to add to the professionalism offered to customers.

So a successful feedyard is dependent upon people—qualified, trained, dedicated, motivated to produce a quality product, efficiently. And thus, to serve their feedyard customers.