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UT Extension
SP693

Evaluate Your Beef Cattle Handling Facilities

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One of the keys to maximizing returns from a commercial cow-calf enterprise is the timely application of basic management practices. Many of these practices require that the cattle be worked several times a year. Without adequate cattle-handling facilities, these practices are either delayed or completely neglected.

Producers desiring to upgrade current facilities or construct or purchase new facilities may apply for a cost-share through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program administered by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Premise identification and Beef Quality Assurance certification are prerequisites for applying for the funds. Approval of the request must be received before items are purchased.

Some of the practices that require handling facilities for animal restraint include castration, dehorning, deworming, implanting, grub treatment, lice treatment, vaccinations, pregnancy checking, artificial insemination, application of fly tags and first aid. The result of failing to carry out these basic, economically essential cattle management practices is reduced production efficiency and reduced financial return to the cattle enterprise.

An efficient cattle-handling facility includes several critical factors. Below is a group of questions about items that contribute to an efficient beef cattle-handling system. Read and answer the questions to evaluate your system. Following each question is a value for each reply. Record the score on the line to the right of each question.

www.picktnproducts.org

Availability of Facilities	**Score**
Do you have a headgate? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Do you have a working chute? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Do you have a holding pen? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Do you have a chute or ramp for loading and unloading cattle? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Are the handling facilities well-constructed and properly braced? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Is the facility in good repair? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Is a set of scales incorporated into working facilities? (Yes __ 5, No __ 0)	_____
Headgate	
Is the headgate adjustable for different-size animals? (Yes __ 2, No __ 0)	_____
Is headgate the walk-through type? (Yes __ 1, No __0)	_____
Chute	
How wide is working chute? (26” or less __ 5, 26” to 28” __ 3, 30” or more __ 0)	_____
Is the bottom half of the working chute built with solid walls? (Yes __ 1, No __0)	_____
Is the chute tall enough to keep animals from jumping over? (Yes __ 1, No __ 0)	_____

Is a blocking gate in the chute?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____
Is a cutting gate in the chute?
(Yes __ 1, No __ 0) _____
Is there a gate in the chute to allow access for pregnancy checking?
(Yes __ 5, No __ 0) _____
How many cows will the chute hold?
(3 or more __ 3, 2 __ 2, 1__0) _____
Is the chute curved?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____
Are overhead braces in chute high enough to prevent head bumping?
(Yes __ 4, No __ 0) _____
Do you have a funnel to get cattle into the chute?
(Yes __ 4, No __ 0) _____
Is the bottom of the chute concreted or filled with packed gravel?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Do you have a solid crowding gate to push cattle into the chute?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Is the chute arranged so cattle move toward light?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Do you have a sorting alley?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____

Holding Pen

Will the holding pen hold at least one-half of cow herd or 30 head, whichever is smaller?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____
Does the holding pen access to crowding pen, working alley and squeeze chute?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Are gates in holding pen located at corners to facilitate moving cattle in and out?
(Yes __ 2, No __ 0) _____

Miscellaneous

Are cattle-handling facilities free of exposed nails or other sharp objects?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____
Is at least a part of the facility covered for working cattle during inclement weather?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____
Is a graveled access road available to working facilities?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Is electricity available at working facilities?
(Yes__ 1, No__0) _____
Is running water available at working facilities?
(Yes __ 1, No __0) _____

Now total your score:

Rate Your Facilities As Follows
67 - 74 points — Excellent
57 - 66 points — Good
48 - 56 points — Fair
37 - 47 points — Poor
Below 37 points – Are you sure you have a cattle-handling facility?

How did your facilities rate?

The purpose of this evaluation is to emphasize some of the more important features of beef cattle-handling systems. If you are not satisfied with your score, make plans now to either renovate or perhaps rebuild. If you need assistance and plans in either developing or improving your beef cattle-handling system, contact your local Extension office.

Producers planning to purchase a squeeze chute or other handling-facility components may apply for a cost share through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program administered by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Premise identification and Beef Quality Assurance certification are prerequisites for applying for the funds. Approval of the request must be received before items are purchased.

The National Animal Identification program is designed to provide the capability of tracing an animal back to its point of origin within a 48-hour period of time in the case of an animal-disease outbreak. It is also supposed to identify all locations where an animal has been during its lifetime. The mechanism for tracing requires that every location (premise) where animals reside must be identified (for example: owner's farm, livestock market, order-buyer lot, fairs, shows, veterinary clinics, etc). Each animal must be individually identified with some type of electronic identification (i.e., electronic ear tags, electronic implants or similar devices). Registration of premises is currently being conducted. Premise registration forms are available at local Extension offices, Farm Bureau offices, local Farmers Cooperative stores and Farm Service Agency offices. Premise identification and individual animal identification are now voluntary except for participation in Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement programs. It is anticipated that participation in the premise and individual animal identification programs will increase as information provided by these programs is needed to market animals.

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