

BUFFERS FOR FEEDLOT CATTLE

Under many feedlot conditions, buffers are not included in the ration. There are however several specific conditions under which the addition of a buffer, such as S-Carb and sodium bicarbonate, is appropriate to consider.

- ADAPTION TO HIGH CONCENTRATES FROM HIGH ROUGHAGE RATIONS:

Adapting cattle to a high concentrate finishing ration is a prime cause of acidosis in cattle. During the adaption to a finish ration, add 0.75% buffer (on a dry matter basis) to the ration. Once the cattle are adapted to the finish ration, allow two weeks for complete adaption, then remove the buffer, or if other indications are present, include at 0.5%.

- FEEDING A RATION THAT CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF ENSILED FEEDS:

When all of the feeds in the ration are ensiled, e.g. haylage, corn silage and high moisture grains, the overall acidity of the ration is high and may lead to depressed intakes. Buffer addition at 0.50% to 0.75% have been shown to improve intakes.

- FEEDING DURING PERIODS OF RAPIDLY CHANGING WEATHER:

Changes in barometric pressure have been shown to adversely affect intake. During times of the year when the weather is variable, intake is often affected. Feeding a buffer during these times can reduce weather induced cyclic feeding patterns. This is particularly true on light weight feeder cattle.

- FEEDING IN TIMES OF EXTREME HEAT:

Buffers included in the ration at 0.75% of the dry matter have consistently been shown to help maintain intakes during times of heat stress.

- FEEDING DURING AND AFTER MANAGEMENT CRISIS:

Feeding a buffer can help ease acidosis caused by variable feeding times or mixing errors. For cattle that show early symptoms of acidosis, including a buffer at 0.75% of the dry matter in the ration can help reduce rumen damage and maintain performance. Contact your veterinarian for treatment of severe acidosis.

Without these conditions present, long term feeding of buffers for finish cattle is not recommended. For further information, or questions, please call WE Soda Alkali.