



## GENERAL MESSAGE

23 July 2021

### Re: Winter / Wet Pen Management

ALFA is aware that some regions across Australia are experiencing above average prolonged rainfall. This, coupled with shorter winter day length and reduced evaporation, has resulted in less-than-ideal conditions for feedlot pens for some members.

### Resources Available to Lot Feeders

To assist, ALFA would like to remind members of the following information and tools available to improve pen management in less-than-ideal conditions:

- **Clean Cattle Manual** - The [Clean Cattle Manual](#) provides up-to-date information, case studies, and practical information on the management of dags and ensuring clean cattle in small, medium and large feedlots.  
Click [here](#) to download.
- **Feedlot Bedding Study** - The [Feedlot Bedding Study](#) outlines the type and cost of regionally available bedding materials and describes the trials using bedding in feedlot pens.  
Click [here](#) to download.
- **Graded Levels of Woodchip During Wet Feedlot Conditions Report** – This [Report](#) outlines the production and management costs and benefits of providing woodchip bedding to feedlot cattle during wet feedlot conditions.  
Click [here](#) to download the full report or [here](#) for the summary.
- **Beef Cattle Feedlots: Waste management and utilisation Manual** – This [Manual](#) outlines This manual is comprised of five sections describing best-practice guidelines for waste management.  
Click [here](#) to download.
- **Beef Cattle Feedlots: Design and Construction Manual** – This [Manual](#) includes the necessary stages of selecting a suitable site, designing the feedlot and its facilities, their construction and the overall management of constructing a feedlot. The manual includes important chapters on pen design and construction.  
Click [here](#) to download.

*The above documents have been developed by Meat & Livestock Australia in consultation with ALFA using grain fed levies.*

- **Pen Cleaning, Manure & Environmental Management Online Workshop** - Delivered over three live-streamed 2-hour sessions this online webinar delivered by MLA in March 2021 focused on bringing the Waste management and utilisation Manual to life to improve the health and welfare of grain fed cattle. Relevant sessions included: Pen surface management & its impact on performance and Pen cleaning 101.  
To view a recording of the online workshop click [here](#).

## The welfare and productivity of cattle can be impacted by prolonged exposure to muddy conditions

The Bureau of Meteorology is predicting [above median rainfall for most parts of Australia from August to October 2021](#), so the factors influencing the incidence of muddy pen conditions are likely to continue in some locations over the coming months.

Wet and muddy pens can result in:

- Reduced feed intakes, reduced liveweight gains and lower efficiency of gain
- Dags on the hides of cattle which pose a potential risk to meat safety
- Challenge of trying to keep cattle clean and the need to clean cattle before slaughter potentially impacting meat quality
- Difficult work environment for pen riders/stock handlers

To reduce the incidence of muddy pens ensure:

- Good pen design that delivers appropriate slope for drainage
- Adequate pen maintenance such as pothole repair to ensure appropriate and effective drainage
- Regular cleaning of pen surfaces that maximises the ability of the pen to drain.
- Targeted cleaning under fence lines at the back of pens to enable runoff to move out of the pens.

In some situations, pen maintenance and cleaning may still not be sufficient Feedlots may consider:

- **Bedding** - The use of bedding with materials such straw, sawdust, rice hulls or woodchip, can be used to soak up excess pen moisture and provide the cattle with an improved surface to lie down. When considering the use of any bedding material, feedlots need to investigate what products may be available, the transport cost, longevity of bedding material, any additional pen cleaning costs, impact on manure use or sale, and the overall cost on a head-day basis.
- **Mounding** - Consider use of mounds formed from manure that is moist enough to compact well and be shaped so they shed runoff and not interfere with pen drainage. In unshaded pens, they should be situated in the centre of the pen with their long axis running down the slope. In pens with shade structures, it is important to avoid mounding under the shade and mounds should be located downslope of the shade structure.

The [Clean Cattle Manual](#) listed above provides consolidated information on pen management, bedding and cattle cleaning techniques to assist feedlots to implement management strategies that are most appropriate for their particular situation, while ensuring animal welfare and worker safety are key priorities.

**If you require any support or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact ALFA directly on 02 9290 3700 or [info@feedlots.com.au](mailto:info@feedlots.com.au)**

**NOTE:** *The material in this GENERAL MESSAGE has been compiled from external resources such as State and Federal government sources. It does not constitute legal advice or recommendations and should not be relied upon as such. It is provided in good faith to assist ALFA members. Appropriate legal advice should be sought that reflects your individual circumstances.*



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