



Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc.

Carcass Quality Shortfalls

To get the highest possible return for your product, and to maintain consumer confidence in the high quality of Canadian beef, practices which cause damage to the carcass must be reduced or eliminated by the responsible management, handling and transportation of cattle. Bruising, injection site lesions, hide damage and other defects in beef carcasses cost the industry up to \$70 per head.

Carcass quality shortfalls are problems of both feedlots and cow/calf operators. Calves that receive improper injections will develop lesions and abscesses that are often retained as adults. In addition, affected muscles have been found to be less tender. It's also important for backgrounders; calves and yearlings that change ownership several times and are rebranded with each change results in severe damage, making the hide almost worthless.

Bruising and Dark Cutters (D.C.'s)

Causes of Bruising:

- horns; overloaded/underloaded trucks; rough handling; low-hanging bars in alleyways; decks and loading docks; protruding bolts; lack of fat cover and bonier shape in cows; slick floors

Causes of Dark Cutters:

- fluctuating climatic temperatures; fasting; mixing strange cattle together; genetics (exotic breeds have a higher incidence)
- prolonged withdrawal of Melengesterol Acetate (MGA) in feedlot heifers
- presence of stags or improper castrates in a load of finished cattle

Management Tips:

- dehorn cattle or use polled bulls
- handle cattle gently at all times; *slow down*
- minimize use of prods, whips and sticks
- load appropriate number of cattle in transport trucks
- design corrals to move cattle easily
- minimize mixing of cattle, especially just prior to slaughter
- ensure cattle are on feed up to slaughter
- ensure precise 48 hour withdrawal of MGA prior to slaughter of feedlot heifers
- castrate properly to avoid stags; when these animals get to feedlots, they contribute to dark cutters
- ensure proper implanting techniques

Injection Site Lesions

Causes:

- dull or dirty injection needles; too large a volume of medicine given in one injection site; poor handling restraints during treatment.

Management Tips:

- inject intramuscular drugs and vaccines in lower value cuts of meat such as the neck (never top hip)
- inject calves in the neck; lesions stay in the prime cuts and show up in the tissues as adults
- give all drugs subcutaneously in neck if label permits
- use 5-10 cc per injection site; space injections several inches apart

Hide Damage

Occurrence and Causes:

- approximately 37% of hides are damaged by the prevalence of brands, with another 34% being tag damaged; insect bites, urine damage, ringworm, pour-on treatments and excess use of electric prods are other causes of hide damage
- overall, the decrease in value of hides can be up to 8% of the total value of fed cattle
- branding is often required by lending institutes as a mechanism to take security on livestock loans

Management Tips:

- keep pens, alleys, loading and unloading areas, and transport trucks clean and dry; use a small brand and brand properly; consider moving brands from rib to hip, high and back; use preventative treatment for external parasites, for example warbles



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FACS represents the livestock industry in advancing responsible animal care and handling practices in agriculture.

Associate Memberships are available from \$50.00 – \$199.99 + GST.
Active Memberships start at \$200.00 + GST
Receipts are issued for all memberships.

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