

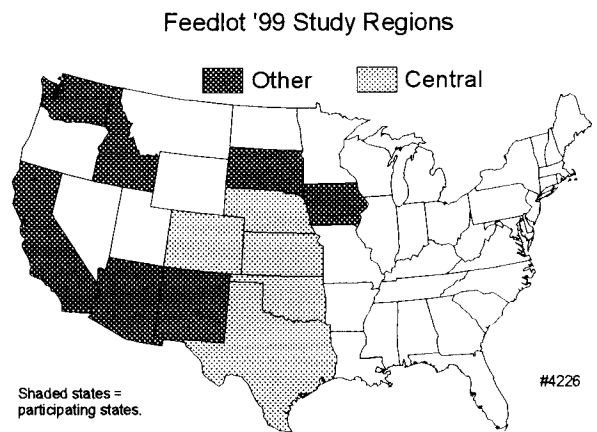
Highlights of NAHMS Feedlot '99: Part I

In 1999, the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study of feedlots with 1,000-head or more capacity within the 12 leading cattle feeding states¹. These feedlots represented 84.9 percent of United States feedlots in 1999 with 1,000-head or more capacity and contained 96.1 percent of the U.S. feedlot cattle inventory on January 1, 2000, on feedlots with 1,000-head or more capacity.

The following information was excerpted from the study's first tabular summary report, *Part I: Baseline Reference of Feedlot Management Practices, 1999*. Operations were categorized into small and large, those with capacities of 1,000 to 7,999 head and 8,000 or more, respectively.

- Beef animals and beef crossbreeds were by far the main class of animal placed in feedlots regardless of operation capacity. Approximately one-half of the placements in small (53.1 percent) and large (53.8 percent) operations were steers and heifers greater than 700 lbs.
- The mortality as a percentage of all cattle marketed and left the operation was greater for large operations (1.3 percent) than for small operations (0.9 percent).
- The largest source of cattle for small operations was directly from auction markets (46.9 percent of cattle). For large operations, the largest percentage (44.1 percent) of cattle was acquired through custom feeding by someone else/joint ownership with the feedlot.

- Most producers (65.8 percent) felt that administering pre-arrival respiratory vaccinations to cattle at least 2 weeks prior to weaning was extremely or very effective in reducing sickness and death loss. Two-thirds (67.2 percent) of producers believed that weaning calves at least 4 weeks prior to shipping was extremely or very effective in reducing adverse health outcomes.
- In large operations, 84.0 percent of cattle placed were processed within 24 hours of arrival, whereas in small operations, 64.5 percent were processed in the same time frame.
- Almost all (97.8 percent) operations that processed cattle administered vaccines to aid in the prevention of respiratory disease.
- Most operations that processed cattle after arrival (68.0 percent) made some adjustments to processing procedures based on attributes of arriving cattle. Adjustment was more common in large operations (72.7 percent) than in small operations (66.1 percent).
- The percentage of placements with horns in Central region operations (17.8 percent) was greater than operations in the Other region (14.1 percent). See map below for the regions.



¹ Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington.

- Over one-half of all operations (54.2 percent) provided cattle with a group or owner identifier, and 39.8 percent tagged cattle with a unique identification.
- A greater percentage of cattle placed in large operations (80.0 percent) was provided with a group identifier compared to small operations (49.7 percent). A total of 21.9 percent of cattle placed in small operations were not identified compared to only 1.6 percent not identified in large operations.
- A larger percentage of cattle in large operations (59.6 percent) were hide branded prior to arrival compared to small operations (48.9 percent).
- Overall, 29.1 percent of all cattle placements were hide branded after arrival at the feedlot.
- Overall, the most common reasons for hide branding were brand laws (44.7 percent of operations) and to deter theft (40.9 percent).
- A greater percentage (80.0 percent) of steers and heifers weighing less than 700 lbs. at the time of placement received more than one implant compared to those weighing 700 lbs. or more at placement (30.4 percent). Overall, 74.0 percent of cattle less than 700 lbs. at placement received two implants, whereas 66.8 percent of cattle 700 lbs. or more at placement received only a single implant.
- Overall, 92.9 percent of operations fed ionophores to placed cattle, while 46.2 percent fed coccidiostats and 27.3 percent fed probiotics.
- Large operations that placed female cattle (75.7 percent) were more likely to feed MGA¹ than small operations that placed female cattle (56.8 percent).
- A greater percentage of female placements in large operations (82.4 percent) were fed MGA[®] compared to small operations (57.6 percent).
- Nearly all large operations (99.1 percent) used the services of a nutritionist compared to 87.9 percent of small operations.
- All large operations and nearly all small operations (96.5 percent) used the services of a veterinarian.
- Postmortem examinations were performed on 57.7 percent and 24.9 percent of dead cattle in large and small operations, respectively.
- Greater than 95 percent of operations considered each of the following quality assurance programs very or somewhat important: location of injections, route of injections, implanting strategy, antimicrobial selection, and measures to avoid residues.
- Large operations were more likely than small operations to provide formal training that included written guidelines to their employees on issues of quality assurance, residue avoidance, animal handling, and employee safety.
- Approximately 79 percent of large operations tested ground water, and 69.5 percent of large operations tested the nutrient content of manure.
- Almost all large operations (93.1 percent) and 73.5 percent of small operations implemented at least one dust control practice during the year ending June 30, 1999.
- Nearly all operations (95.0 percent) with a capacity of 8,000 or more head used lagoons to capture water runoff. Three-quarters (74.9 percent) of the large operations had berms to control runoff.

For more detailed information on the study and sampling methodology and information on the NAHMS Feedlot '99 tabular summary reports, contact:

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¹MGA[®] is melengesterol acetate, a heat suppressant for females.