BACKYARD CATTLE FATTENING

Cattle fattening has gained prominence as an important business prospect of the livestock industry in the Philippines. It gives the farmer year round work and provides him with extra income. He can make use of cheep, plentiful farm by products such as corn storvers, rice straw, copra meal, rice bran and sugarcane tops, which ordinarily go to waste. Most importantly, it helps meet the urgent demand for high protein foods in the diet.

Backyard cattle fattening or on a large scale, can be profitably undertaken. It consists of buying healthy stock, feeding and fattening them for 120 to 180 days, and selling them at anytime of the year. Minimum space for housing is required: 1-1/2 to 2 square meters per head for sheltered feeding area, and 5 meters per head for a fenced loafing area.

Given the proper care, there is less danger of diseases and parasites affecting confined animals and the fattening period is shorter. Marbling or intermixture of fat and lean in meat is better abstained through feedlot fattening. Customers prefer this.

Selecting Feeder Stock

To make profit and to produce good meat, consider the following points:

1. Age

Two to three year old animals need less feed for every unit of weight gain because they digest more efficiently and consume larger volume of feed in proportion to body weight.

Younger animals cost less because of lesser weight. They require longer period of feeding and higher feed quality reach the desired finish.

Older feeder stock (4 years and above) need less time in the feedlot and will eat a wider variety of feed and roughage than young stock. If nutritious feed is abundant, younger cattle are generally more economical to fatten. If only roughage and plant by products are available, older stock are preferable.

2. Sex

Steers (castrated males) are preferred to heifers (under females) because they are readily available and easier to manage. Steers also gain weight and grow faster than heifers.

3. Breed

Improved breeds and crossbreds gain weight faster than native animals. Tropical breeds are more adaptable to local climatic and feed conditions than temperate breeds. Some of the recommended tropical breeds are;

a. Brahman – color is silver gray, some are reddish. This breed is resistant to diseases and can withstand heat better.
b. Ongole or Nellore – color is white. The bulls may have dark gray head, neck and hump. Knees may be black.
c. Indu-Brazil – colors vary from light to silver gray and brownish dark gray to red.
d. Batangas cattle – this is really a distinct breed of cattle in the Philippines. Cattle fattened ir, Batangas comes from Mindoro, Masbate and other provinces. The term Batangas beef has become popular because of the good quality cattle produced by the "supak" method of Batangas.

4. Health Condition

A healthy animal is alert and active, has bright eyes, smooth hair coat and moist muzzle. Avoid animals with rough skin and those, which are blind or lame. Make sure that the animals have been properly vaccinated against common diseases before bringing them to the feedlot.

When to Buy Stock

Feeder stocks usually come cheap during the dry season (January – April). Country roads are more accessible during these months, marking it easy to transport animals from ranch or auction markets to the farm.

Feed Requirements

The feed ration should be adjusted to the requirements for fattening cattle based on the availability of feed materials in the locality. Cattle can be fattened on all roughage rations or on roughage concentrate ration. Give good quality grass legume mixture in the farm of pasture herbage. It is best to restrict animal movement at all times so that it uses less energy and gains weight quickly.

To estimate the dairy feed requirement, young fatteners consume about 3 percent of their body weight in air dry feed. A fresh grass has about 75% moisture content. Therefore, a 250kgs. Feeder cattle will be require 7.5 kilos of grass with a 12-14% moisture. However, given fresh grass it requires 35 kilos.

Provide salt at the rate of about 30 to 50 grams per head dairy. Place in saltboxes or containers.

Roughage concentrate ration is the combination of forage or farm by products and concentrates. Some common concentrates are rice bran, copra meal, ipil-ipil leaf meal, and corn by products, including meat and bone meal, and salt. Their farm by products could be utilized as concentrate mixtures and given to cattle at least twice a day.

Recommended Concentrate Mixture used for cattle fattening:

Sample1		Sample2	
Copra meal	60%	Copra meal	50%
Rice bran	39%	Rice bran	25%
Salt / powdered shell	1%	Dried chicken manure	24%
		Salt / powered shell / ground limestone	1%
	100%		100%

Utilization of Farm By-Products to Cattle Feed

1. Rice straw – chopped rice straw can be fed to growing fattening cattle up to 40% of the total ration. If baled or stacked and adequately protected from weather, rice straw can be used as additional source of energy anytime of the year when feed supply is short. It contains 3-4% protein, 0.04-0.08% phosphorus, and 0.20-0.30% calcium.
2. Corn Cobs – (without kernels) can be coarsely ground and fed to cattle up to 45% of total ration. It contains 45% total digestible nutrients and 3% crude protein. Although containing higher crude fiber, it is more digestible than rice straw.

Housing and Equipment

Proper housing is important in successful cattle fattening operation. Protect animals fromextreme hot or cold weather conditions. Natural or artificial shade is necessary. Avoid using barbed wire because it may cause injury to the animals. A cattle shed may be made out of local materials such as bamboo, nipa, and wood. Since these animals will spend most of the time eating in the feedlot, provide individual stall for each animal, feeding and watering troughs, and enough standing space. Entrance is provided in front and the rear for drainage. Rough concrete flooring is provided to prevent slipping and injury to animals.

For shelter, a 1-1/2 square meter area per animal is necessary. The stall may be adjacent to fenced loafing area of about 5 square meters.

Marketing Fattened Cattle

Six month after the date of purchase, fattened cattle should weigh approximately 275-325 kilograms and be ready for market.

In transporting and handling, see to it that animals are safely loaded. Avoid steep ramps. Do not lift animals are bodily into the truck. A gradually sloping ramp with side railings is advisable. To ensure better footing see to it those animals do not slip and fall during transport. Provide a layer of sand under straw or rice hull bedding. Remove all protruding objects, such as nails and splinters, from trucks. Also, check for cracked or missing boards that may injure the animals. Overloading and under loading of trucks cause crippling and bruising of animals. Load them quietly and gently, pushing or sticking them may cause stress, re sulting in weight loss and lower profits. It is better to transport animals in the evening if trucks are not covered.

COMMON DISEASES OF CATTLE

A. Food-and-Mouth Disease

- *Cause*: Enterovirus of 3 major strains – A, O & C
- *Transmission*: Direct contact with sick animals excreting the virus; indirect transmission by ingestion of contaminated feeds and contact with infected products and animal excretion by inhalation.

- *Symptoms*: High fever, depression appearance of vesicles and blisters with fluid on tongue, gums, ud ders and interdigital spaces; flowing saliva; animal refuses to eat, becomes lame and refuses to stand.
- *Control*: regular FMD vaccination every 6 months in areas where the diseases is common.

B. Hemorrhagic Septicemia

- *Cause*: Common bacterial disease characterized by hemorrhage (escape of blood from the blood vessels) and septicemia (a condition manifested by the generalized presence of pathogenic bacteria and the associated poisons in the blood). The disease is rapid in onset and runs a relatively short course.
- *Transmission*: 1) Direct contact with infected animals;
  2) Ingestion of contaminated feedstuffs;
  3) By aerosol
- *Symptoms / signs*: 1) Sudden increase in body temperature (41-42 C);
  2) Profuse salivation.
  3) Severe depression.
  4) Development of hot, painful swelling on the throat, dewlap;
  5) Difficulty in breathing; and
  6) Development involvement in the later stages.
- *Control*: Isolate and quarantine infected premises. Promptly dispose of carcasses of dead animals by burning or burying in soil. Segregate sick animals and treat them with anti biotic. Vaccinate apparently healthy and unexposed animals. Sterilize and disinfect used instruments and equipment.

C. Anthrax

- *Description*: Anthrax is a Peracute disease characterized by septicemia and sudden death with the exudation of tarry blood from the natural body openings. It is a disease virtually of all warm-blooded animals, including man.
- *Transmission*: 1) Direct contact – spread from one animal to another, wherein the bacilli are excreted in the urine, feces, and saliva and from the natural body openings contaminating the area.
  2) Ingestion; and
  3) Indirect transmission, through:
  a) Airborne via respiratory tract (inhalation)
  b) Vector borne through stable files and mosquitoes.
- *Cause*: Caused by large, gram-positive, aerobic spore-forming rod –shaped bacteria known as *Bacillus Anthracis*. In cultures, it forms long chains, which, unstained, appear as solid filaments because the square ends of the individual cells fit very closely together. Under low magnification, the margin of the colonies, which lie in parallel formation look like, locks of hair. It is for this reason that they are sometimes described as "Medusa head" colonies.
- *Symptoms*: 1) Peracute form (1-2hours)
  a) Sudden death
  b) Unclotted blood comes out from the natural body openings.
  2) Acute form (24-48 hours)
  a) Depression
  b) Fever
  c) Difficulty in breathing
  d) Loss of appetite
  e) Swelling in hind quarters
  f) Hemorrhage in many parts of the body
  g) Death, and
  h) Diarrhea stained with unclotted blood coming from the natural body opening.
  3) Chronic form (48 hours or more)
  a) Swelling (ventral muscle, thorax, shoulder)
  b) Edema
  c) Difficulty in breathing, and
  d) Death
- *Prevention / Control*: 1) Control by immunization
  2) Proper disposal of dead animal by burning or deep burial. Quicklime should be

used to cover the body before covering with soil. The depth should be 2 meters;
3) Decontamination of all contaminated pens, feeding material, beddings, etc;
4) Avoid contact with infected animals and contaminated animal by-prod-ucts;
5) Reduce movement of animals;
6) Quarantine infected areas;
7) Practice environmental and personal hygiene;
8) Control insect and flies; and
9) Notify the proper authority in case of outbreak

GENERAL GUIDE FOR CATTLE FARMERS

A. Selection of feeder stock

Purchase feeder stock from reliable breeders or select good quality steers from the livestock market

B. Deworming and Spraying

Have fecal examination conducted to determine proper drugs for deworming. Spray animals to control external parasites, such as ticks, lice and flies.

C. Vaccination

In coordination with the bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) or the office of the Provincial Veterinarian, vaccinate against Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Hemorrhagic Septicemia and other common disease.

D. Feeding the Animals

Feed animals dairy with concentrate one to two kilograms per day during fattening period. Give roughage daily at 3% of Body weight if given air dry; 8.75 % if given fresh.

E. Confinement of Animals

Provide proper and adequate space for confinement.

F. Bathing the Animals

Bathe and wash animals at least once a week to increase feed consumption and promote sanitation.

G. Water and Salt in Diet

Given clean water without limit. Provide ordinary table salt about 30-50 grams per head per day.

H. Marketing of Animals

The desired finishing weight of fattened cattle of 275 -325 kg is attained in 180 days after date of purchase. Visit the Auction Market nearest your place.