Recommendations To Improve Worker Safety On Feedyards – Summary Document

Sponsored by:
Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA)
Moore ag safety
Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA)
Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH)
Feedyard Worker Safety Roundtable

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Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the United States. Livestock and cattle operations create unique safety concerns due to the very nature of the work involved including working with and around animals. While general safety programs and policies provide a basic foundation for operations, there is a tremendous need to address hazards specific to the feedyard industry. One system currently being implemented to improve feedyard worker safety revolves around the concept of sustainability. On feedyards, key performance indicators of sustainability include an increased efficiency in the use of, decreased risk to, and decreased negative impacts on human, environmental and financial resources. Among the organizations working to improve safety on cattle feedyards are a coalition that includes: Agricultural Safety and Health Council of America (ASHCA), the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CS-CASH), Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA) and Moore Ag Safety. Each of these organizations promote risk management through a safe and healthy work culture.

The mission of this feedyard safety coalition is to proactively address ongoing and emerging occupational safety issues on feedlots through collaboration with owners, managers and allied service organizations to develop effective and measurable methods of intervention, education and outreach programs to improve the safety of workers.

This document represents an effort by ASHCA, CS-CASH, TCFA and Moore Ag Safety to fill a need that was jointly identified and explored— to define the risk, and understand the best safety practices that can be implemented on feedyards with the ultimate goal of reducing injury and fatality rates. ASHCA’s Program Committee initiated a roundtable discussion for investigating worker safety at cattle feedyards. The roundtable approach was used to gather stakeholder input for identifying and coordinating priorities for future safety initiatives related to worker safety at cattle feedyards. The one-day roundtable included representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups. Great synergy around this topic was developed. The results from the roundtable discussion are summarized on the following pages. These results will be used to guide future efforts to improve safety programs, reduce injury and fatalities and ultimately increase the sustainability of cattle feedyards.
Positive aspects of current safety efforts at cattle feedyards.

Timing
- The time is right for a discussion about feedyard safety training as there is now more awareness, demand, cooperation, communication, and acceptance of safety practices on feedyards.
- Safety training may become consumer driven.
- Opportunity to have an organized approach to safety.
- Organizations are now having high level discussions about safety.

Animal Handling
- There has been more discussion on feedyards about low-stress animal handling.
- Low stress cattle handling may improve worker safety, reduce costs associated with facility and equipment damage and improve company profitability.

Feedyard Safety Staff
- More feedyards now have a designated safety person.

Hiring and Training Techniques
- There has been an increase in online and on-demand training.
- More new hire trainings are taking place.
- Organizations are implementing a more thorough hiring process.

Feedyard Workers
- More employees are responding to the safety message.
- There is less tolerance for drinking and drugs.
- More Spanish materials have been made available.

Challenges of current safety efforts at cattle feedyards.

Common Practice
- Unsafe practices are routine on some feedyards. These practices would not be allowed in other workplaces (examples: noise and loud music).

Training Materials and Practice
- A large number of educational resources exist, but the execution in practice is lacking.
- Some resources and educational materials may not be at the appropriate language or literacy level.
- Lack of competency based training.
- Lack of understanding about how to effectively utilize and execute safety programs.
- Concern that OSHA compliance driven training will replace practical feedyard safety training.

Feedyard Workers
- An aging workforce. Older employees with feedyard knowledge are leaving and are being replaced by new/young people that may lack the core knowledge.
- Language and culture barriers.
- Feedyard understaffing. There is a squeeze on the labor force. Feedyards are competing with oil field labor. (“Two cowboys short”)
- Feedyard workers with urban backgrounds.
- Fatigued workers are at a greater risk for injury.
- Generational differences are reflected in work priorities.

Economics
- Feedyard financial concerns may affect the level of safety training. Small operators may not spend the money required to train their cowboys.
- Operators and workers may not understand the link between injuries and profitability.

Time Requirements
- Extensive amount of time required for changes to be implemented.

Animal Handling
- Cattle are now larger, creating more risk to feedyard workers.
- Cowboys may feel rushed because of a heavy workload, resulting in an increase in worker injuries.
Desired changes in the current safety and health efforts at cattle feedyards.

Training Materials and Practice
- Formalize competency training, each employee needs to understand what is required to do their job safely.
- Combine the training materials that already exist and come up with a gold standard.
- Develop a program for feedyard safety representatives (Train-the-Trainer).
- Provide mobile training equipment for OSHA and other training.
- Develop a template for basic training in English and Spanish for feedyards that could be customized later to fit the specific facility.
- Increase safety education in schools—high school, 2 year programs and veterinary training programs.
- Work with the experts to develop more hands-on training at feedyards.
- Teach low stress cattle handling and relate it to human safety.
- Develop a Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) training guide that would include organizational policy.
- Recognize and reward existing safe behaviors.
- Garner support for safety training from industry and insurance groups.

Feedyard Safety Staff
- Work with Human Resources personnel to develop effective hiring tools.
- Develop more safety leaders with cattle expertise.

Safety efforts at cattle feedyards that should continue.

Training Materials and Practice
- Ongoing training programs should continue and expand to include hands on training.
- Continue to integrate safety into all training programs.
- Continue to begin training on day one—New Hire Safety Training.
- Continue and increase use of technology to improve safety.

Feedyard Workers
- Continue to encourage drug and alcohol testing.

Hiring Process
- Continue good hiring practices through careful screening.
Safety efforts at cattle feedyards that need to be addressed.

**Training Materials and Practice**
- There are too many materials that are not effective, with little organization or standardization.
- The limited size of some operations may result in having limited resources available for training.
- Lack of simple “Feedyard 101” training materials.
- Lack of incentives or recognition for good practices.

**Facilities**
- New processes being implemented in old facilities.
- Many feedyards don’t have a proper venue for conducting safety training.
- Production and facility changes may not always be aligned with safety needs.

**Feedyard Workers**
- Lack understanding regarding costs and benefits “what’s in it for me?”
- Culture: cowboy mentality, cultural differences and generational concerns.

**Hiring Process**
- Ineffective hiring processes are common.
Opportunities to improve safety and health efforts at cattle feedyards.

Implementing new technology and methodology
- Develop new technologies and methods that will reduce risk. Example: intranasal vaccination may reduce needle sticks.
- Use text alerts to send preformatted safety messages to feedyard workers

Collaborations within the feedyard community
- Develop multi-state feedyard collaborations.
- Network with feedyard, safety and industry personnel to build a common program that can be customized.

Marketing opportunities
- Use effective marketing to make safety “cool” and to be seen as a value.
- Design contests with rewards/incentives
- Market safety positions at feedyards.
- Develop publications marketing safety that are tailored to specific topics.

Feedyard Training and Materials
- Materials need to be filtered and organized.
- Improved graphics and marketing are needed for educational safety materials.
- Instructional materials need take into consideration employee language and literacy level.
- Recognize current efforts in safety training for feedyard workers.
- Develop a short course specific to feed yards.
- Host industry meetings in regional areas and include safety as a topic.
- Develop and offer train-the-trainer program at the feedyard “How to be a feedyard safety manager”.
- Conduct site visits with managers.
- Foster safety experts in the feedyard industry.

Emerging Issues
- Keeping apprised and investigate emerging issues.

Management
- Implement a Total Worker Health approach.
- Implement a top down safety approach. Some managers may need to buy into the safety message.

Collaborations with insurance organizations
- Work with insurance companies to increase feedyard workers awareness regarding the cost of injury and illness to the feedyard and ultimately to the workers themselves.
- Perform hazard analysis using insurance data.
- Using a Third Party for confidentiality, collect insurance data that can be summarized.
- Combined efforts- feedlot safety, occupational safety, insurance.