

TIPS FOR SELECTION OF BEEF CALVES FOR FATTENING



Calf fattening venture is based on raising young cattle calves in batches at the farm premises. The calves, preferably males, between 12-18 months of age, are fed nutritionally balanced concentrate ration, or Total Mixed Ration (TMR) as major source of energy and protein for a period of 90-100 days to get higher body weight gain. Each calf with initial live body weight of 180-200 kg can gain weight of up to 90 kg in 90 - 100 days, if fed properly on formulated fattening feed.

The daily weight gain varies from 700 to 850 grams depending on the quality of feed given to them. The farm can be set-up at any appropriate location with easy availability of fodder and water. There is a year-round market, however, the demand increases before Eid-ul-Adha and one batch will be raised solely for this occasion, in which, well-fed animals are sold at a premium price.

It is recommended that calves (preferably male) of local cattle breeds such as Sahiwal, Cholistani, Red Sindhi, Tharparkar, Rojhan, Dhanni, Lohani, Bhagnari may be considered for fattening purpose. For sacrificial purpose, the cross-bred calves of Brahman, Angus, Charolais, etc. are also recommended.

The male calves of breeds such as Sahiwal and Cholistani are preferred for fattening due to higher meat production and dressing percentage, i.e. 50-55%. Their fat to muscle composition and carcass weight is demanded by meat traders for export purpose.

Important points to keep in mind are:

- Initial live body weight should be around 180-200 kgs at 12-18 months of age.
- Little emaciated yet fully grown (according to age) animals may also be accepted for fattening as research shows that these animals respond well in terms of feed efficiency.
- Good housing leads to good management practices and ultimately optimum production. Housing should be less expensive, well-ventilated, comfortable and dry with hygienic environment, leading to easy drainage and removal of dung and waste material.
- It should protect from extreme environmental conditions providing maximum sun exposure with axis of length to be from east to west.
- It should be planned such that future expansion is possible, when required.
- Continuous availability of feed and water as daily supply of clean drinking water in clean troughs, i.e. 15 to 20 litres per animal of daily water consumption maintains the production capacity of the animal.
- Animals tend to consume more water when consuming TMR and salt.
- De-worming for endo-parasitic infestations is necessary in each batch shortly after arrival at farm.
- Timely vaccination against infectious diseases should be done as a prophylactic measure.
- Mortality should not exceed 2-3 % per annum in fattened animals.
- All animals should be ear-tagged and recorded for breed of animal, initial live weight of animal, age of animals, date of purchase, etc. on arrival at the farm.
- Records must be maintained for weight gain, medication, de-worming, etc.
- Periodically cull animals that have become uneconomical.