

vary from year to year and from one locality to another; feeds vary somewhat from year to year; and other variable factors influence feed consumption. Recommendations can be made to serve as guides, but skillful cattle feeders adjust their method of feeding to fit each particular group of cattle. Perhaps the best general recommendation is to take at least three to four weeks in increasing the grain ration of steers to a full feed. It apparently makes little difference what hours cattle are fed, so long as they are fed at the same time each day. Regularity is essential.

Finishing Period.—Cattle are considered to be on a full feed of grain when they are eating each day a quantity of concentrates equal in weight to at least 2 percent of their live weight (for example, 800-pound steers would have to eat at least 16 pounds of concentrates per head daily to be on full feed). Cattle on full feed should be fed twice daily all the grain they will clean up in about one hour.

Calves and yearlings usually will consume each day a quantity of feed (concentrates plus hay) equal in weight to 3 percent of their live weight. Calves will sometimes eat slightly more. Two-year-old steers and older cattle often will not eat more than an amount of feed equal to 2.5 percent of their live weight. There is considerable variation among cattle in this respect and many will consume slightly more feed than this. It is very desirable to give fattening cattle all they will eat. Roughly one-half of the feed a steer is capable of consuming is needed for maintenance. Only after satisfying the maintenance needs can feed be used for body gain.

FEED REQUIRED

Generally speaking, there is not much difference in the quantities of grain required to finish steers of different ages. For example, calves eat less feed per day than yearlings but the calves must be fed for a longer period to reach the same degree of finish. Older cattle, however, require somewhat more roughage.

Because of their proportionally smaller maintenance requirement, ability to eat more feed in relation to their live weight, and the fact that much of their gain is growth, calves make the cheapest gains. In a Nebraska experiment yearlings required 25 percent more feed and two year olds 50 percent more feed per hundred pounds gain than calves (6).