

**VALUE OF BEDDING FOR REPLACEMENT HEIFERS
WINTERED IN A SLATTED BOARD FENCE SHELTER**

Feed lot cattle have been successfully housed with only a slatted board fence for protection at the Dickinson Experiment Station since 1964. This trial was conducted to determine what advantage bedding the animals and building up a manure pack would have on winter gains and feed efficiency.

In this trial, 11 Hereford replacement heifers for the Dickinson Experiment Station herd were allotted to each of two lots. Both lots had a 9 foot high slatted board fence shelter on the north and west sides. The heifers received a high roughage growing ration and were wintered for 197 days starting in November. One lot of heifers was bedded with straw at weekly intervals, and more often when the weather made it necessary. The other lot received no bedding during the entire trial.

Table 4 shows the rations fed and feed costs. Table 5 summarizes data on weights and gains in the bedding evaluation trial.

Table 4. Ration, Feed and Bedding Costs in the Bedding Evaluation Trial.

Ration	Lot with Bedding		Lot without Bedding			
	Total lbs. feed per lot	Avg. lbs. per head per day	Total cost per lot	Total lbs. feed per lot	Avg. lbs. per head per day	Total cost per lot
Alfalfa hay	5,418	2.5	\$ 67.73	5,418	2.5	\$ 67.73
Tame grass hay	5,418	2.5	48.76	5,418	2.5	48.76
Corn silage	49,310	22.8	177.52	49,435	22.8	177.97
Rolled barley	6,468	2.98	100.90	6,468	2.98	100.90
Minerals	433	0.2	20.78	433	0.2	20.78
Total feed cost	-	-	\$415.69	-	-	\$416.14
Bedding	140 bales	-	21.00	-	-	-
Total feed and bedding	-	-	\$436.69	-	-	\$416.14
Cost per cwt of gain	-	-	\$ 17.72	-	-	\$ 17.56

Table 5. Data on Weights and Gains in the Bedding Evaluation Trial.

No. of head per lot	11	11
Initial weight – lbs.		
Average per lot	4875	4880
Average per head	443.2	443.6
Final weight – lbs.		
Average per lot	7340	7250
Average per head	667.3	659.1
Gain per lot – lbs.	2465	2370
Number on days on trial	197	197
Average daily gain per head-lbs.	1.14	1.09

Summary

The use of straw for bedding improved the appearance and the average daily gain of these heifers by .05 pound per day. The heifers not bedded were not adversely affected by the lack of bedding except for the slightly lower gain. The animals in both lots remained in good health throughout the trial.

It has always been considered good practice to bed cattle when possible. However, the slight additional gain may not be enough to offset the cost of bedding.