

Beef feedlot cattle prefer more forage in their ration when given a choice

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Feedlot finishing diets in Western Canada typically contain 85-90% grain. These diets have been associated with ruminal acidosis and liver abscesses. The objective of this study was to determine the effects of allowing cattle to self determine their intake of concentrate and forage on growth and performance. 120 feedlot heifers (585 ± 39 kg BW) were randomly assigned to either a Choice (animals self selected the amount of concentrate and forage) or a Control (TMR: 87% concentrate and 13% barley silage; DM basis) treatment (4 pens/treatment). Cattle were provided ad libitum access to feed, water and a mineral block and individual daily DMI were collected for 68 d. Slaughter data included ribeye area, percentage of saleable meat and liver abscess scores. Choice heifers consumed 7% less concentrate than Control animals, and had a higher gain:feed ratio (0.17± 0.005 and 0.13±0.005 kg/kg, respectively; P<0.003). Daily DMI (Figure 1) was also lower for the Choice heifers (7.60± 0.2 and 10.34±0.2 kg/d, respectively; P<0.0001). There were no treatment differences in ADG (1.36± 0.07 kg/d) (Figure 2), or any of the carcass characteristics measured. These results suggest that feeding a TMR containing less concentrate to finishing cattle may be a viable, economical alternative to current feeding practices.

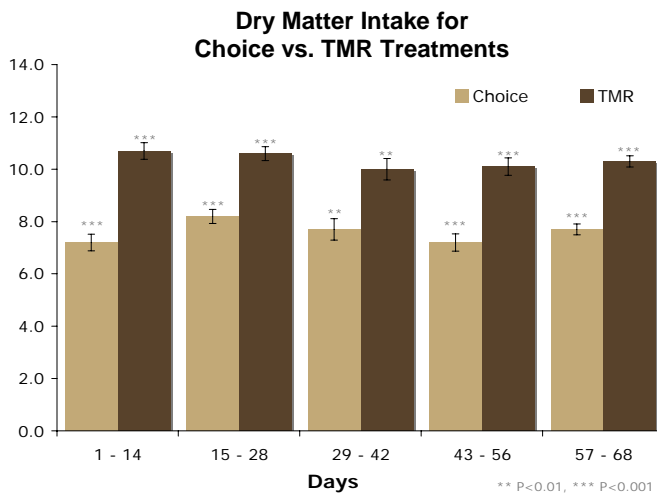


Figure 1: Heifers provided a choice had lower DMI

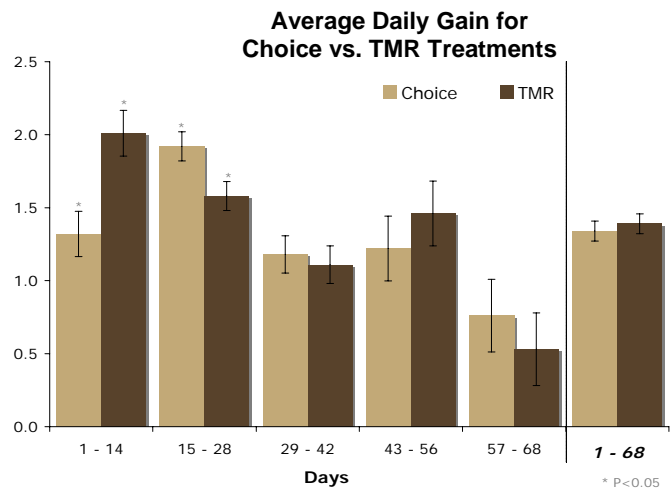


Figure 2: There was no overall difference in ADG between the two treatment groups.