



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online <https://ksre-learn.com/managing-cattle-weight>

Note to editors: A photo to accompany this story is at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54369504448> _

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Cattle Chat: Managing weight gain in cattle

K-State beef cattle share how cattle's metabolism changes during the feeding period

[By Lisa Moser](#), K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — It is common knowledge that people's metabolism slows as they age. Similarly, cattle also experience changes in their metabolism as their body ages, say the experts at the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute.

[Speaking on a recent Cattle Chat podcast](#), the team of experts addressed a question from a listener about the relationship between the amount of time cattle spend in the feedyard growing to a weight of 1,400 pounds, and the average daily gain they experience during that time period.

"The daily growth or average daily gain of cattle decreases over time because of how the composition of the gain changes," K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said. "Calves that are younger and lighter weight are going to deposit a higher portion of lean tissue for each pound of gain, and as they move closer to a processing weight, they will be adding a higher proportion of fat in each pound of gain."

He said that lean tissue consists mostly of water and that makes the cattle more efficient with their feed consumption. Thus, cattle will gain weight at a slower pace as they get closer to their finished weight.

"An average daily gain of 2.5 pounds per day is a reasonable amount of gain, but it will be a different type of gain depending on where that animal is in the feeding period," K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said.

The amount of gain can be measured by weighing the cattle at different points in the feeding period, Lubbers said.

“Just know that if the goal for the whole feeding period is an average daily gain of 2.5 pounds and they are only gaining that in the first period, they will be behind at the end of the feeding period,” Lubbers said.

To address that feeding challenge, Lancaster said, “just figure out the target gain for each of those weight periods and adjust the diet accordingly to meet the end goal.”

To hear the full discussion, [listen to Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast, <https://ksubci.org/2025/03/14/>

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