

Five Buckles



Scott Ressler,
Environmental Services Director
Mandan



Although many areas of the state are not currently seeing abundant rainfall, spring and early summer weather can change quickly. Periods of heavy moisture often lead to muddy conditions that create management challenges for beef producers. These muddy conditions can persist much longer than normal, but they, generally, occur to some extent every year. The dry time of the year is the time to plan for these conditions.

Muddy conditions decrease feed intake, slow average daily gain of cattle, increase problems with footrot and negatively affect feed efficiency. Recommended best management practices include clean water diversion of surface water, good drainage of feedlot pens, well-designed mounds and adequate feedlot space per animal.

Diversions

The first step in reducing mud in feedlots is to prevent outside surface water from entering the pen. If water is coming off building roofs, use gutters to collect the rainfall and divert water away from the lots.

Drainage

Adequate drainage is critical in a feedlot. Properly shaping and grading pen surfaces help move runoff water out of the pens as quickly as possible,

reducing mud and improving overall pen conditions. A definite drain from each pen is ideal, but, if you must drain one pen through another pen, make sure to prevent ponding of water along fencelines. A pen with a slope of 2 to 4 percent will provide adequate drainage with minimum erosion.

Mounds

Mounds, if constructed properly, can be used to reduce mud problems. Mounds provide a comfortable resting place for cattle during long periods of wet weather. Mounds that are too steep, too narrow or too small, however, will not be used effectively and, in some cases, will do more harm than good.

Space requirements

Lot space requirements for cattle are generally 300 to 500 square feet per animal. More space is required per animal where pen surfaces are flatter, and mounds are not constructed in pens.

A while back, NDSA President Randy Schmitt's granddaughter Rowyn was learning how to put her shoes on. One morning, Randy said to Rowyn, "Your shoes are on the wrong feet." Rowyn quickly replied, "I don't have any other feet!" Randy thought to himself, "Fair enough." 🌻

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HOW THE SERVICE WORKS

- Members contact the NDSA.
- A site visit is scheduled.
- A site visit and evaluation are conducted.
- NDSA recommendations are prepared and delivered to members.
- The NDSA helps members file appropriate paperwork, seek cost-share assistance and identify qualified resource people, if applicable.

FSA seeking producers for county committees

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2026 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 3.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others. Qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates.

Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November. 🌻

