

Note: This year I enrolled as a beef project member and I plan to write a few articles to address some of my challenges of feeding and raising a project steer. This may be helpful to the reader with the management of their project. Just as members do, I weighed-in my steer “Cowboy” in March and my fair date is August 30th at the Open to the World Steer Show at the Twin Falls County Fair.

Title: I Weighed-in My Steer, Now What?

By Cindy A. Kinder, Area 4-H Extension Educator

On March 19th Cowboy was weighed in at 725 lbs, he is an Angus/Charolais cross steer. Cowboy is a large frame steer (score 6) and I estimated he should weigh 1375 at fair time. In order for Cowboy to make this market weight he has to gain 3.80 lbs per day.



On April 6th Cowboy weighed 780 lbs; he had gained 3.06 lbs per day. That is below his estimated weight gain on my growth chart! I was feeding Cowboy 6 scoops of rolled barley/corn, (twice a day) which is 18 pounds per day. I thought that was more than enough! Why is he not gaining more?

I also noticed that Cowboy was cleaning up his grain and would come running when it was time to feed him. He was telling me he wanted more. When I weighed a scoop of grain it weighed 2 lbs, not what I originally thought! I had better increase his feed!

Now I give him 9 scoops of corn (4.5 per feeding) which is challenging him to eat more. He leaves just a little grain and now when the grain is cleaned up I know it is time to give him more. (Cowboy should be eating at least 2% of his body weight in grain, per day, which is $780 \times 2\% = 15.6$ lbs per day or 8 scoops.)

I am watching what I feed Cowboy; besides feeding him barley/corn and some Vigor Plus, I am also feeding Cowboy alfalfa hay. The other day part of the bale was moldy; I did not feed him the parts that were molded. The bugs (bacteria) in a beef animal's rumen can handle a little bit (<5%) of mold but I would not like to eat mold, so I tossed the bad parts away.

There was some hay and “gunk” in the bottom of the water tank so I cleaned Cowboy's water tank which I fill every week depending on the number of animals that share his tank.

Looks like Cowboy is now on the right track, eating and drinking the right amount of the good stuff.

How is your project going? Here are some questions you can ask yourself.

- ✚ What does your grain weigh?
- ✚ Are you feeding 2% of body weight in grain a day?
- ✚ What is your animal telling you?