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Dakotaland Feeds, LLC

A NEWSLETTER OF DAKOTALAND FEEDS

Summer Supplement

In a Nutshell:

- **Trace minerals need to be supplemented**
- **Selenium can be borderline toxic naturally**
- **Phosphorus and calcium are required for lactation**
- **Salt is needed for electrolyte balance**
- **Protein supplementation is often not necessary**
- **Protein is best supplemented with tubs or cake**
- **Thin cows need supplemental energy to increase condition**

Deciding what cattle need during the summer months can sometimes be confusing. It doesn't help that your options are nearly endless. What is worth spending your money on and what isn't?

The first thing that cattle really need on pasture are the trace minerals. Regardless of the stage of growth of most grasses, trace minerals like zinc, copper, manganese, cobalt, and iodine are at levels that are less than necessary for producing a quality calf by the end of the grazing season. Zinc is a critical nutrient for growth and reproduction and its importance cannot be overstated. It needs to be in about a 3:1 ratio with copper so both are absorbed from the intestine in necessary amounts. An inverted or low ratio results in neither mineral being absorbed as it should. Trace mineral salt is not adequate to deliver what cattle need. A full mineral program is needed to deliver the necessary mineral nutrition.

Selenium is the one trace mineral that we know is bioavailable in our forage because it is borderline toxic in some areas of South and North Dakota. Natural toxicity means we really don't need any additional selenium in our mineral programs. However, most of the area can go with OR without added selenium in their mineral and never see a difference. But in those areas that are already high, adding selenium in a mineral supplement is enough to push things to toxicity and cause loss of the long hair from the tail, lameness, and poor reproduction. Other areas of the country need added selenium because they are deficient, but that is not the case in the Dakotas.

Phosphorus and calcium are crucial for growth and lactation. Early spring grass is very high in phosphorus, but it doesn't last very long. Most of the time, an 8% phosphorus mineral is adequate to meet the needs of a brood cow over the course of the summer (no need for 12%). She wouldn't necessarily need added phosphorus in early spring, but we know that high quality grass won't last long, and you will suffer in terms of weaning weights and production if they fall short on phosphorus.

Salt is another vital nutrient during the summer months. Cattle require salt and it is something that you should provide for the cows to maintain electrolyte balance and high production. It can also be used as a limiter for your mineral if the cows start consuming more than desired.

Protein is the one nutrient that you will hear lots of discussion surrounding. If grass quality is average and your calves are more than 45-60 days old, protein supplementation for the cows is probably not going to get you a whole lot. If forage quality is very poor, then protein supplementation will help. If the cows are behind in condition and forage quality is average, then you may need to consider an energy supplement instead. Protein and energy are both going to be needed in higher amounts than a traditional 3-4 oz mineral program.

There are multiple ways to supplement protein but we often go to tubs or cake instead of liquid in a pasture situation. Tubs allow us more consistent free-choice consumption and cows are less likely

to overeat on a tub compared to a free choice liquid. Cake allows us to control the amount better than a free-choice liquid and we can add Rumensin and mineral to the cake and not have to worry about if one of them gets too much. Free choice liquid intake is dependent on forage quality and quantity and high intakes are going to cost a lot more than a tub or cake. Protein supplied by a free choice liquid comes from urea or other non-protein nitrogen sources which puts the cows at risk of urea toxicity if intakes are too high. Calves will also start to consume the free-choice liquid and it takes a lot less to kill a calf than a cow. With the price of calves, that is a big, unnecessary risk.

Energy supplementation for the cows that are thin can be done with cubes or Accuration® blocks or mixes. The Accuration® products are designed for higher intakes because we need more volume to deliver enough energy to increase body condition. The energy requirement drops as milk production declines so the lower quality grass is still adequate to meet protein and energy requirements much of the grazing season. Energy supplementation with protein for the calves is better use of your money because your return for creep feeding will be substantially better than just trying to supplement the cows.

There is more than one way to do supplementation and what is right or works for one producer may not be a good fit for another producer. We need to consider the class of cattle, stage of lactation or breeding, forage quality and quantity, condition of the cows, and labor availability to really make the best decision for your operation. Talk to your local Dakotaland Feeds consultant if you have questions on summer supplementation strategies so we can help you find the right fit.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- Get your creep feeders in shape to put out in pastures and ***get creep feed out for spring-born calves***
- Keep mineral in place for the cows on pasture
- Feed ***Clarifly®*** or ***Altosid®*** to control horn fly populations
- Get prepared for heat stress for cattle in the lots—shades, sprinklers, extra water tanks, etc.
- Get your feed storage area ready for silage season and get your inoculant lined up
- Consider stockpiling distillers for winter feeding
- Watch for signs of anaplasmosis in your herd—older cows are typically more affected

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