Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

Mineral Supplementation for Cattle Vital to Good Health and Productivity

Beef cattle need minerals to remain productive and healthy. The mineral status of the brood-cow affects reproduction, growth, milk production and health. When cattle are pushed to perform to a higher genetic potential, mineral demands increase. If these demands are not met, performance is reduced.

Cattle have evolved an elegant system for storing and retrieving minerals from various body stores as they are needed. The success of this system depends upon reliable replenishment from dietary sources.

Body tissues have constantly changing mineral demands. No producer can precisely match the varying needs of each animal by manipulating the mineral supplement. Instead, the strategy is to provide supplemental mineral resources to keep tissue stores “optimally mineralized” so that ever-changing biological needs are met. Unfortunately, there is not a single, simple “recipe” or product that covers all situations.

Mineral deficiency is more common than once thought, but it is no more common than protein or energy deficiency. All aspects of a good nutrition program must be kept in mind while mineral nutrition is improved.

Consumption is important! This seems obvious, but is critical. Cow-calf herds are generally provided minerals “free-choice.” Cows may or may not “choose” to consume adequate amounts of mineral. This is why mineral consumption should be monitored.

Genetics may affect mineral needs. Genetic selection for improved milk production or increased gain increases nutritional mineral demands for both cows and calves. There are also breed effects. Recent research, for example, has indicated that continental breeds require higher dietary levels of copper and selenium.

The content of minerals in forages can vary due to fertilization or the lack of fertilization and growing conditions. This can affect the major and micro mineral content in the forage crop. It has also been determined that liming, and/or industrial pollution may alter the composition or proportion of minerals in forages.

Mineral deficiency symptoms may be the result of an imbalance. Symptoms of copper deficiency—rough hair coat, unthrifty appearance—are occasionally observed in spite of copper inclusion in supplements. This is possible because sulfur and/or iron are often in excess in either feed or water.

A good, adequate mineral supplement for the cow/calf herd is money well spent. This is an area where skimping is not a good rule. A loose mineral fed free choice in a mineral feeder that protects the contents from weather is recommended.
Do not trust cattle to eat minerals if they need them and leave them if they don’t. Cattle have “nutritional wisdom” relative to their need for salt and they will crave minerals if deficient. Mineral-deficient cattle will normally consume several times the recommended level for a given supplement.

Expect moderate variation in mineral consumption. Many factors affect consumption (season, pasture moisture, location of mineral feeder, etc.) Cows with young calves typically consume more. As calves grow, they also consume mineral. It is advisable to make allowances for some variation, and avoid making significant adjustments unless over- or under-consumption is persistent or significantly different than the label recommends. For additional information, contact your local Extension Office and request the publication “Mineral Nutrition for Beef Cattle.”

Agricultural Market Summary

Cattle Market Trends

No cattle prices were available. Cattle markets continue to succumb to the doldrums of summer. Every market within the cattle complex appears to be searching for their summer lows, but none appear to have reached rock bottom. After finding the bottom, prices are expected to rebound. However, prices are not expected to challenge record prices from a year ago. The market has likely reached the place where prices will slowly begin to erode as beef cow inventory continues to expand and as heifer retention increases. The increase in cows and heifers will eventually lead to larger numbers of feeder cattle which will then lend itself to the slow erosion of prices the next several years. The one plus side to a slow erosion of prices is that prices are not expected to drop off the map by any stretch of the imagination. Prices will continue to be strong relatively speaking which should mean several years of strong profitability for cow-calf producers. (Dr. Andrew Griffith, UT Extension, Market Comments)

Grain Market Trends

Corn, soybeans and wheat were down for the week. Corn – Cash prices, $3.87-$4.45. September futures closed at $3.92 a bushel, down 38 cents. Soybeans – Cash prices, $9.95-$10.45. August futures closed at $9.91 a bushel, down 28 cents. Wheat – Cash prices, $4.81-$5.29. September futures closed at $5.11 a bushel, down 51 cents.

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

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