

Considerations For Selecting The Best Mineral For Your Cattle

DR. CLYDE LANE JR.

KNOXVILLE, TENN.

The Forage Mineral Survey, conducted between 2002 and 2004, revealed that beef cattle in Tennessee required a mineral supplement that was different than what had previously been utilized to supplement available forages. Specifically, the forages were high in sulfur and low in copper, zinc and selenium. With the sulfur being antagonistic to the other minerals, it was necessary to increase the levels of copper and zinc and use a more available form of selenium. Mineral dealers serving Tennessee beef producers have done an excellent job of formulating the minerals that will work under these difficult nutritional challenges. The problem is that the copper, zinc and selenium levels can be increased only to a certain level before becoming toxic to animals.

The sulfur levels have been high enough to require mineral formulations to contain copper, zinc and selenium at levels near the maximum tolerable limit.

Another issue has now surfaced. A large number of producers are utilizing distillers grains or corn gluten as a cattle feed. Both of

these products are high in sulfur. These feeds are being secured as co-products from the plants or may be in commercial feeds. In those situations where there are reproductive problems, lowered productivity, lowered levels of immunity from vaccinations, etc., it may be advisable to reevaluate the mineral program. Nutritionists are very concerned about adding additional amounts of these minor minerals to compensate for the extra sulfur. In some situations the minor minerals available in supplements were adequate before the additional of the gluten or distillers, but are inadequate now. The best solution may be to limit the use of these high sulfur feeds.

The intent of this article is not to be negative toward corn gluten and distillers grains. These feeds work well in beef cattle rations when used at recommended levels and with proper supplementation. The intent is to make beef cattle owners aware that if they are experiencing problems now that were not present earlier, this might be something to check. Δ

Dr. Clyde Lane Jr., is Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist with the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.



Link Directly To: **BRANDT**



Link Directly To: **SYNGENTA**