

It Is Time To Shop For Cattle Feed Says Extension Specialist

MT. VERNON, MO.

December is here and so is feed shopping time for beef producers according to Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

“The dry summer has shortened the forage supply and in all likelihood has altered the quality of hay and silage. Since the old standby, stockpiled fescue, is not as plentiful, more concentrated feeds either in bag, bulk or other forms will be relied on by area producers,” said Cole.

By-product feeds such as corn gluten feed, dried distillers grains with solubles and soybean hulls are becoming more popular and are available.

Bottom Right: Feeding Soybean Hulls In a bunk.
Top Right: Feeding Dried Distillers Grains On The Ground.
Bottom Photo: Calves eating dried distillers grains from a bunk.

Photos from University of Missouri Extension



A good place to locate sources of these supplements is the University of Missouri Extension By-Product Feed list service. It is accessible at <http://agebb.missouri.edu/dairy/byprod/bplist.asp> on the Internet.

Another list at <http://agebb.missouri.edu/dairy/byprod/energygain.asp> compares the value of the supplements based on current cracked corn, soybean meal, limestone and dicalcium phosphate prices.

“This allows a producer to look at the relative prices of distillers grains and corn gluten feed (for example) and see which one is the best buy,” said Cole.

The prices and availability are updated each week. The week of Nov. 23 showed 93 different sources of feed items.

“When studying the list, keep in mind freight charges and moisture levels of feeds you might think look cheap that really aren’t when they reach your farm,” said Cole.

Farmers, especially those who have off-farm employment or have cattle scattered several miles apart, should factor in convenience when prices are compared. Pellets or cubes are popular since an investment in feed bunks isn’t nec-

essary.

Feeds in meal form, like dried distillers grain can be fed on the ground in small piles, but research from the University of Nebraska shows around 35 to 40 percent waste compared to bunk feeding. In addition, the bunk-fed steers outgained those fed on the ground by 0.3 pound per day.

“High quality, by-product feeds reduce daily forage needs and allow steers, heifers and cow-calf pairs to make satisfactory gains and produce their normal milk supply in case they are lactating females. A rule of thumb is one pound of feed like dried distillers grains can replace



two pounds of roughage,” said Cole.

A drawback with the feed list is the prices are on a trailer load basis. Most cow herds in the region have 50 cows or fewer. According to Cole, a trailer load is more than a producer that size would feed in a year’s time.

“A number of feed stores now provide small bulk quantities of the various by-products. They may also mix together two or three items to meet a customer’s protein or energy request,” said Cole.

Some will blend varying amounts of salt with a palatable feed so it may be self-fed. Adding an ionophore may also be possible which should improve feed savings.

“Shopping for feed may not be as newsworthy as Black Friday or Cyber Monday, but should result in a feed cost reduction and more dollars in your pocket next spring,” said Cole. Δ