



## FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER

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### **3 ways mineral supplementation is key to optimal performance in beef cattle.**

By Amanda Radke

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Although mineral supplements are just a small part of the total diet of a beef animal, they are an important detail to get right when it comes to maximizing cattle performance.

“It is important to monitor mineral consumption on a herd basis,” writes Deke Alkire, Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation planned consultation manager. “Simply providing a mineral supplement will not ensure that deficiencies are met. Intake of a free-choice mineral supplement will vary from animal to animal and change with the animal's requirements and the mineral content in the forage and any supplements.”

Alkire says a reasonable range for mineral intake is 2-5 ounces per day, depending on the composition of the mineral supplement and the factors previously mentioned. He adds that, generally, consumption is lower during the summer months and higher in the winter months due to the mineral levels available in growing forages versus dormant forages.

Alkire lists three important ways minerals play a role in the performance of beef cattle:

#### **1. Growth performance**

Adequate consumption of potassium (K), sodium (Na) and chlorine (Cl) are critical for muscle contraction, nerve signal transmission and enzymatic reactions, he says. Deficiencies in these minerals can result in decreased intake and gains.

Mark Landefeld, Ohio State University Extension educator, warns against offering mineral without knowing exactly how much the herd needs. He says, mineral supplementation should not be done haphazardly in cow-calf operations. “Producers need to monitor mineral consumption regularly to be sure cows are consuming proper amounts. Directions on each product's bag should indicate how much each animal should consume in a given amount of time. Making this calculation for a 7-day period (often times 2-4 ounces per head per day), and feeding that amount once each week, is one way to help monitor intake,” he adds.

#### **2. Reproductive efficiency**

The ratio of calcium to phosphorous in the total diet is also important for reproductive efficiency, says Alkire.

“While cattle can tolerate ratios of between 1:1 and 7:1, excessive calcium may decrease the absorption of other minerals,” Alkire says. “Therefore, it is recommended to maintain a ratio of calcium to phosphorous between 1.5:1 and 3:1. Deficiencies in calcium and phosphorous or an imbalance in the calcium to phosphorous ratio can result in decreased fertility and milk production.”

Landefeld adds that reproduction losses aren't always obvious, but a cow that is a month or two late-bred might have a mineral deficiency. He offers this example: “Think about this. If you have one open cow, or animals not calving on expected calving dates, due to insufficient minerals in the feed, you could have easily paid for many bags of minerals with the loss you have incurred. One calf not born; (\$1,000-\$1,500 lost, plus feeding momma all year), one calf 21 days late; (a calf gaining 2 pounds per day would be 42 pounds x \$2.00 per pound = \$84 lost) per missed heat cycle.”

#### **3. Immune function**

A beef animal can't perform well if its immune system is not running on all cylinders. Calcium (Ca), phosphorous (P) and magnesium (Mg) have many vital functions, including bone development, growth, energy utilization, membrane structure, muscle contraction, and hormone secretion, says Alkire. Other important trace minerals include cobalt, copper, iodine, iron, manganese, selenium and zinc.

Alkire writes, “Trace minerals are required at very small concentrations, making deficiencies difficult to recognize. Deficiencies of the trace minerals can result in decreased intake and gain, reduced fertility and libido, retained placentas, abortions and stillbirths, low birth weights and poor calf performance.”

Mineral supplementation is an important factor in improving the health and performance of the cow herd. Unfortunately, deficiencies -- even slight ones -- can easily go undetected, but can result in decreased reproductive efficiency, poor growth performance and depressed immune function.

“All of these factors ultimately impact your profitability,” says Alkire. “Providing a free-choice, complete mineral supplement all year is cheap insurance against the many problems associated with mineral deficiencies.”

Landefeld adds that it's much easier and more cost-effective to proactively manage cattle to prevent mineral deficiencies than trying to pinpoint production problems caused by deficits. “Adequate minerals and nutrition should not be overlooked. You are paying for it one way or the other! Proper minerals and nutrition just makes ‘cents,’ actually dollars, and several of them for the understanding producer.”

## MLS ADDS NEW HIGH ENERGY PRODUCT “ENERGY CAKE PLUS”

The all natural protein, high energy, vitamin, and trace mineral package is specifically formulated for growing and developing breeding beef cattle and will compliment roughage (grass hay, dry grass pasture) to replace range cubes or cake. Contains Zinpro®Availa®4.

Zinpro Availa®4 provides copper, zinc, manganese, and cobalt from highly bioavailable organic sources to aid fertility, soft tissue health, bone and joint development, and Vit-B absorption.

Check details at [www.mlstubs.com](http://www.mlstubs.com)

### *THE MLS SALES TEAM CONTINUES TO GROW*



MLS is proud to announce the addition of Ed Kreimier to our sales staff. Ed comes to MLS after spending 15 years with Bridon Cordage. Ed and his wife Barb reside in Rifle, Colorado. Ed will be working in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and part of Wyoming. With Ed’s many years of experience and connections throughout his territory, we are confident that our customer base will see the benefits of his addition to our team. Ed’s contact information can be found on the MLS website, and please welcome him to the team when he stops in to see you.

## NATURAL BEEF PROGRAM (Worth Repeating)

When you hear the phrase “All Natural” being used, what does it mean to you? It can refer to a livestock feed product, a marketing/certification program for cattle, or used as a general description of products available at the local grocery store. Unfortunately, there is no universal meaning, or understanding of the phrase that is adequate or acceptable to use in all cases. The focus of this article is on the meaning of “All Natural” as it pertains to beef cattle feed products, and the subsequent marketing of beef cattle being fed and marketed to “Certified Natural Beef” programs.

When referring to and marketing a feed product that is labeled “All Natural”, the description has a very specific meaning. That is, the product contains only natural protein ingredients (ex. soybean meal, sunflower meal, cottonseed meal) and DOES NOT contain urea or non-protein nitrogen ingredients in its formulation, period. Another issue to consider with “All Natural” feed labeling is that “All Natural” is not the same as “All Vegetable”. The difference can be that a feed product labeled as “All Natural” can contain animal products such as hydrolyzed feathermeal, fish meal, and porcine fat. You must read the ingredient panel on a product to determine what ingredients are used and considered “All Natural” in that product. Just as a point of clarification, MLS manufacturing facilities DO NOT store or use animal protein products prohibited for use in ruminant feeds.

The “All Natural” description above has very little to do with a “Certified Natural Beef” marketing program. There are many certification programs and companies in the industry, and the only way to know what is accepted in each program is to communicate with them, and get in writing what their certification parameters are. A good place to start is to review the information on the USDA website: <http://processverified.usda.gov/> and pay specific attention to the Never Ever 3 program. This briefly explains what is accepted and what is not in most “Certified Natural Beef” programs. Again, if you have customers that plan to market their cattle to “Certified Natural Beef” programs, the only way to be sure is to communicate with the program administrator or auditor.

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