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High Intakes and Ways to Lower Them.

As the season continues to get drier and the protein levels in the grass continue to fall away some cattle are starting to take in higher levels of Quicklick. When the intakes increase the cost of supplementing can rise and if intakes are excessive the extra urea will not be as efficiently used. The two main reasons that intakes increase are that the stock are chasing some nutrient in the lick or that the lick is more palatable than the pasture available. To solve this problem we need to make the lick less palatable and/or provide more of the missing nutrients in the lick.

Firstly check that the intake is high, we have trough record sheets available for your use to monitor your stocks intake. Target intakes are about a litre per head per day for dry cows and larger steers, a litre and a half for lactating cows and half to three quarters of a litre for weaners. When cattle are first introduced to the lick the intakes may start out at a higher level as the beast attempts to make up for deficiencies in its system. After a few weeks intakes should slow to the required level. If the season has been dry for some time cattle will consume more lick for longer to make up for deficiencies, so starting to feed earlier will also lower consumption.

If the intake is high there are several methods we can use to lower it. Moving the trough away from the water will lower intake and encourage stock to graze out. Moving the trough around to areas that still have a body of feed will help make the stock graze these areas. Increasing the urea content to 5% will also help lower intake and get more protein into the cattle. As the protein levels in the grass are particularly low at this time of year and cattle will be chasing the lick for protein, this is generally effective and increases the nutritional benefit to the beast. We do not recommend feeding 5% urea product at the start of feeding as cattle should be stepped up to this level. The 5% urea products are Base 85, Pro 85 and Topline can also be made at 5%. Our souring agent will also lower intake but is slightly more expensive than extra urea.

If intake can still not be lowered enough an Ezilicker can be fitted to the trough. The Ezilicker is a disc that floats on the surface of the feed with holes through it to force cattle to lick the Quicklick rather than drink it and practical experience has shown it to reduce intakes by as much as 30%. We have Ezilickers in stock and they are available at a reduced price for Quicklick customers. The Ezilickers are 1060mm in diameter and fit the yellow troughs that we sell. This method is effective and practical particularly as in many cases only a some paddocks require consumption to be decreased

Intakes can be regulated by feeding the required amount and allowing the stock to run out. If this is done the stock should be fed at least twice a week so that the population of rumen microbes does not die down. Ideally the cattle should not be out of lick for more than a day. If the amount of available dry standing feed falls to too low a level, the cattle will attempt to fill up on lick. This can also lead to excessive intake.

By monitoring and adjusting the lick we can ensure the stock get enough from the Quicklick without feeding excessive quantities and so maximise the return on your supplement investment.

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