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Wet Season Supplementation

Hopefully everyone has received some beneficial rain by now and have green grass in the paddocks. Many will think good, I don't need to feed anymore since it has rained. There are many benefits from continuing to feed through the wet season including phosphorous supplementation, the advantages from Bovatec, trace mineral feeding, low levels of Non Protein Nitrogen, and improved consumption control when it does become dry again. On green feed consumption levels will drop significantly to about half a litre for a dry cow. Stock will not take much lick while the pasture is lush and green but as the grass matures and has some bulk they will return to it.

Bovatec works by altering the population of rumen microbes. By feeding Bovatec stock gain an extra 60-100 grams per head per day due to the more efficient utilization of the energy in the grass. At a conservative \$1.50 per kg this is worth 9 to 15 cents per head. To compensate for the lower intakes on green feed our wet season mixes this year will have higher Bovatec levels.

Phosphorous is stored primarily in the bones of cattle. Growing stock have a higher demand for Phosphorous to build bones and tissue. Therefore phosphorous supplementation is required more in the summer months particularly in younger growing cattle. If you have any doubts about the phosphorous status of your country a dung sample can be analysed to determine if the pasture is meeting the requirements of your stock. This test is only effective on green pasture so I would recommend anyone who has any doubts get a test done as soon as possible.

Trace mineral deficiencies occur all year round but the best production responses on deficient country come from supplementing on green feed. Copper, cobalt and selenium are the most common deficiencies and occur on coastal country and on lighter country inland. On one coastal property weaners grew an extra 12kg from copper and selenium supplementation alone. Wet season Topline has enhanced levels of trace minerals to prevent deficiencies.

As the pasture matures and has an increased proportion of stem material which is less digestible and particularly when it goes to seed a small amount of urea or Non protein nitrogen can be beneficial to increase digestion. Experience from water dosing has shown 10-20 grams of urea per head per day can increase the rate of digestion and intake of stock on green tropical grasses. In addition the high levels of sulphur in Quicklick may be beneficial to stock on forage sorghums to combat prussic acid problems.

Year round feeding prevents the situation that can occur when stock are first fed on dry feed and so eat excessive lick in an attempt to make up for nutrients that they may have become deficient in. By allowing stock access to the lick year round the total intake of Quicklick was lowered when compared to feeding only in the drier months.

The benefits obtained from wet season feeding are many and can lead to improved growth rates over summer and so earlier turn off of growing stock. The lower intakes also substantially lower the cost of feeding making it an economical decision to have lick available all year round.

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