

Monitor Mineral Consumption

Clyde Lane, Jr.
Professor-Animal Science
University of Tennessee

Beef producers need to monitor the mineral consumption of their herd. Over consuming or under consuming can result in mineral related problems.

Before making management changes that will result in changing mineral consumption, be sure the level of consumption is known. Utilize the table below to record mineral consumption. Each time mineral is added to the feeder, write it down. Calculate the amount of mineral that is consumed on a daily basis. If the amount seems too high, check for wastage. A hole in the feeder can allow a lot of mineral to fall to the ground and be wasted. Does the mineral get wet when it rains? Is a part of the mineral provided dissolving and running on to the ground. Also, remember that calves, if they are several months old, can be consuming some of the mineral. Also be aware that animals tend to overeat when a new mineral is introduced to them. Do not forget that consumption is variable, but should be within a reasonable range.

If the consumption is not near the amount recommended on the mineral bag, then adjustments need to be made. The first adjustment would be to move the mineral feeder closer to the water source. If consumption is too high, move the feeder farther away from the water source.

Another adjustment could be to add additional salt if the consumption is too high or add dried molasses if consumption is too low. Don't forget to work with your mineral dealer if there is a problem. Most companies have many different formulations. It may be as simple as changing to a different formulation.

In summary, every producer should monitor the mineral consumption of their beef herd. Proper levels of minerals in the diet will allow for optimum production of the animals. For additional information on this or other topics related to beef production, contact your local Extension agent.

