

## Understanding Feed Labels

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Producers need to understand the information provided on feed labels if they are to make informed buying decisions.

To assist in understanding the information provided on feed tags, each item will be briefly discussed.

- **Feed Name** - This may include the product name and brand name and must carefully conform to regulations about appropriateness for a specific use.
- **Medication** - If feed additives (including drugs or other non-nutritive, special-purpose additives) are used, this must be on the label. Directions for use will be included as well as precautions.
- **Weight** - The weight of the feed in the bag will be printed.
- **Purpose** - This will include the kind of animals for which the feed is intended.
- **Guaranteed analysis** - This will include minimum and/or maximum concentrations of nutrients, such as crude protein, crude fat, crude fiber, vitamins and minerals. This is extremely important to producers who want to choose an economical feed that is suited for a specific need. For example, in some cases, a high-protein supplement is needed, and at other times, a lower-protein feed will work.
- **Ingredients** - The feedstuffs that are used to prepare the feed must be listed; however, in some cases, ingredient classes may be used. For example, sometimes generic terms, such as "plant protein byproducts" may be used when a variety of products may be used at different preparation times.
- **Company Name and Address** - Must be included on the label.

- **Feeding Guidelines** - Feed labels should be carefully studied and followed. Do not use feeds in a manner different from label directions. Problems may result from improper feeding. Medicated feeds that are advantageous for one type of animal may be dangerous if used by another type of animal. For example, feeds containing Rumensin® or Bovatec® may be valuable for cattle and extremely dangerous if consumed by horses. Mineral mixtures prepared for swine or cattle may not be suitable for sheep due to excessive levels of copper.

Feeding animals can be a complicated business and feed labels may not contain enough information to cover all situations. Do not hesitate to ask questions. Feed suppliers are usually willing and able to answer questions relating to correct use of their feeds. Extension agents and veterinarians are also excellent sources of nutritional information.

**Label Comparisons Table.** Use this to compare feeds based on information from feed labels and/or dealers.

	Feed One	Feed Two	Comments
Company			
Feed name			
Form of feed			
Weight			
Medication(s)			
Crude protein			
Fat			
Fiber			
Vitamins			
Minerals			
Cost per unit			
Cost per pound*			
Recommended feeding level*			
Feed cost per head per day*			

\* Multiply Recommended feeding level by the Cost per pound to determine feed cost per head per day.

Additional information on beef cattle nutrition can be obtained by contacting your local Extension office.