



Animal Health & Nutrition Specialists!

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Myths about Nutrition

There are many common misconceptions and myths about feeding and supplementing cattle. In this issue we will look at some of the common ones and how they can lead to you spending money on nutrients that you don't actually need or miss out on some of the benefits available.

Sulphur kills parasites. This idea is quite wide spread in Queensland. It is true that a deficiency of sulphur will lower the immune response as the immune system is built on protein of which sulphur is an important part. Stock deficient in sulphur will have a lowered immune response and so will show higher burdens of ticks, fly and lice. Feeding adequate sulphur will help an animal that is deficient fight off any parasite burden. Feeding more sulphur than that will not have any affect on the parasite burden. Quicklick has adequate sulphur for the needs of any class of stock so there is no need for extra sulphur.

Calcium Phosphorous ratio The ratio of calcium to phosphorous in the diet for cattle can vary between 1:1 and 6:1 without any problems. For many years it was thought that a 2:1 ratio was required. Supplements are often formulated with a 2:1 ratio of calcium to phosphorous. When analysing supplements it is important to consider what is in the entire diet. As grasses with low phosphorous have plenty of calcium available, the ratio in the supplement does not need to be 2:1. In fact Calcium deficiencies are very rare and supplementation is not usually required at all.

Cattle need salt Grazing cattle may require a small amount of sodium to be added to their diets while chlorine is very rarely deficient. Cattle will eat salt far in excess of their requirement for sodium. Salt is added to get cattle to eat dry licks and to limit the amount they take.

Nutritional wisdom There is some truth to this myth but not enough to make it the basis of a supplementation program. The acceptance of supplements will vary with such factors as experience, taste of the supplement and deficiencies. Cattle will eat a supplement just because it tastes good with no requirement for it at all with the classic example being salt. However cattle will also continue to take a supplement that eases a deficiency. The cattle eat the substance which lowers the deficiency which tells the beast's brain that the substance was good for them and so it thinks of it as tasting good.

Excess Phosphorous causes weight loss As phosphorous absorption is an active process in the small intestines the beasts metabolic processes can control how much is absorbed. Excesses are excreted in the faeces. The main hazard when feeding excess phosphorous is to is your wallet as it is an expensive element to feed. One very early trial showed a weight loss from feeding excessive amounts of phosphoric acid which upset the rumen acid base balance. Recommended quantities of phosphorous to feed are between none and 4 grams for dry stock on a low rate of weight gain and none and 8 grams for lactating cows depending on the nature of the country on which they are running.

Rumen Modifiers cause Antibiotic Resistance The most common rumen modifiers belong to a group called ionophores. These affect microbe populations by making conditions more favourable for one group of bacteria over another. The ionophores have no use in human medicine and are unrelated to any antibiotic that does.