



Animal Health & Nutrition Specialists!

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Water

Water is a major nutrient. Limiting water intake can decrease the actual dry matter intake of feed. A beast will usually drink about 4 times as much water as their dry matter intake of pasture. If the beast is not drinking due to alkaline, dirty or salty water there intake of pasture and therefore of vital nutrients will be decreased. On dry feed water intakes are higher as there is little water in the feed and water is needed to keep the feed moving in the rumen to be digested.

A Canadian trial compared watering directly from earth dams, the same water pumped to troughs and aerated water. 9-10% higher weight gains were found in the cattle drinking from troughs. This was explained by higher water intakes and therefore higher feed dry matter intakes.

Stock prefer water in a pH range of 6.5 to 8.5. Water outside of this range can lower water intake and therefore performance. pH can be adjusted by the use of lime or alum to bring it into the preferred pH range. Salinity (total dissolved solids) should be below 4000ppm for beef cattle and 5000ppm for sheep for optimum performance although they can tolerate higher levels than this. Salinity can increase during summer due to evaporation from shallow dams, troughs and bore drains.