

FEEED FOR THOUGHHT

News For Cattlemen From Suga-Lik® A Product Of U.S. Sugar Corp.

Why is “FULLY FORTIFIED™” Important to Your Cow, Her Calf & Your Bank Account?

Chet Fields, Ph.D. PAS

Nutrition of the beef cow is important during all stages of her reproductive cycle. The nutrients required by the beef cow, in addition to water, are an appropriate supply of energy and protein, the essential minerals (calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, chloride, sulfur, magnesium, manganese, copper, iron, zinc, selenium, cobalt and iodine), and the essential vitamins (A, D, and E). All of these nutrients are critical not only for meat and milk production, and reproduction but also for optimum immune function. Quantitatively speaking, the greatest requirement for all nutrients (except vitamin E) occurs at the peak of lactation, which generally occurs about 60 days after calving. Several studies have shown that approximately 60% to 65% of the variation in beef calf weaning weight can be attributed to the milk production of the dam. Therefore, it's obviously very important to provide sufficient essential nutrients to the cow to permit her to reach her genetic potential for milk production and hence, calf weaning weight.

Why is vitamin E the exception to the above? The greatest challenge to immune function in both the cow and her calf occurs at calving. Milk contains very little vitamin E. Very little vitamin E crosses the placenta and the calf is essentially deficient of vitamin E at birth. Colostrum

contains approximately 10 times the level of vitamin E as milk and is the only significant source of this nutrient that is essential to the calf's immune function. Thus, the greatest requirement for vitamin E is during the last trimester of pregnancy to assure adequate vitamin E levels in colostrum.

Either directly or indirectly, virtually all nutrients are important for a functional immune system. A good example is mastitis prevention in cows. Although many beef producers don't give mastitis much thought, mastitis has been reported to occur in 17% to 54% of the cows in beef herds in the United States. The impact of mastitis on calf weaning weight is shown in Table 1 below.

Recent research in dairy cows suggests that mastitis is also associated with poorer reproductive performance. Cows that were free of mastitis had dramatic improvements in days to first service, days to conception and services per conception compared to herd mates infected prior to first service (*Bovine Veterinarian 9/2002, p.36*).

When feeding the appropriate Suga-Lik® Fully Fortified™ supplement according to our recommendations you can be assured yours cows are receiving at least 100% of their essential vitamin and mineral requirements, at every stage of their reproductive cycle.

TABLE 1

Effect of Mastitis on Weaning Weights of Beef Calves

27 lb to 31 lb decrease in calves from cows with mastitis
 42 lb decrease in calves from cows with S. aureus mastitis
 21 lb decrease in calves from cows with S. aureus mastitis
 15 lb decrease in calves from cows with high somatic cell count
 18 lb decrease in calves from cows with mastitis
 22 lb, 20 lb, 37 lb and 48 lb decrease as the number of infected quarters increased from 0 to 4

Haggard et al., 1983 J. Am. Vet. Med. Assoc. 182:604-606
Watts et al., 1986 J. Animal Sci. 62:16-20
Newman et al., 1991 J. Animal Sci. 69:4259-4272
Simpson et al., 1995 J. Animal Sci. 73:1552-1558
Nickerson et al., 2000 Large Animal Practice May/June p. 20-23
Duenas et al., 2001 J. Animal Sci. 79:1996-2005

Why Do More?

Terry Weaver

Every year, about this time, two topics seem to always arise in my conversations with cattlemen. "Should I keep supplementing my cows?" and "March and April are our two toughest months!" It would seem that the second statement would answer the preceding question; but it's not that easy especially when it comes to money.

In Florida, March, April and May can be three tough cattle ranching months! Forage quality is usually improving (we commonly see this in our spring forage analysis); yet, forage quantity is often less than adequate. It takes a lot of forage to feed lactating brood cows. Typically there isn't an adequate quantity of forage till the June rains arrive. Without plenty of the forage base diet, cattle lose condition. By spring, most of the cows have calved, are milking heavily and are expected to be rebred or in the process of rebreeding. Their nutrient requirements, as well as the performance expectations of them, may be at the highest level in the brood cows' entire production cycle. Calves should be growing at full potential and starting to consume forage like their mamas. Spring can certainly dictate the herd's

beef production results.

All these factors make the question, "Should I keep supplementing my cattle another month?" seem more important, doesn't it? Invariably this question is followed by, "How much is it going to cost me?" Isn't the better question, "How much will it make me?"

Continuing to supplement for 30 more days can pay dividends several ways. Research has shown that continued supplementation improves cow body condition, conception rates and calf weaning weights. When you consider extending supplementing, consider first how many cattle you have bred and how many you think you can get bred. Depending on

which Suga-Lik® Fully Fortified™ you choose, in round numbers it'll cost you up to about \$9 per head to continue supplementing for 30 days. That's \$900 for 100 head of cattle. Three more calves per hundred (3%) more than pays for the supplement. Any more calves are dollars added to your bottom line. Could you, for example, increase your conception rate from 80% to 85%?

More calves may not be the only benefit of continued supplementation. Earlier calves and heavier calves can also be an advantage of feeding 30 more days. A cow breeding



one breeding cycle earlier can add 50 pounds to her calf at weaning time. At today's cattle prices that could mean a \$40 increase in revenue on that calf. A \$9 invest-

ment this year for a \$40 return next year is very nice. So, what about this year's calves? In 1994, Dr. Findlay Pate, Director of the University of Florida Ona Range Cattle Station, reported the results of a four-year study. He found an average of 0.40 lbs per day increase in calf gains on cows and calves supplemented with molasses based liquid supplement in the summer. Assuming similar results, a 30-day return would be about \$10. This covers the \$9 investment with a dollar to boot – making next year's pay-off even better!

When considering the time to quit supplementing, consider how much money you might be leaving on the table. Consider the money you could make with a small investment. Consider the health of your cattle and calves. Consider Suga-Lik® Fully Fortified™ Liquid Supplement. **For more information, call a dealer nearest you or our toll free telephone number: 800-940-7253.**

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