

# FEED FOR THOUGHT

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

## Are You Feeding The Right Feed?

*Charlie Hofer, PAS*

A few issues ago in Feed for Thought, I wrote of some of the reasons why cattlemen feed supplements. The generic answer is, "Because the grass can't do it all." We all know that the better the forage quality, the less supplemental nutrients are needed. However, it is important to understand that no forage, regardless of its quality, can supply all the nutrients that productive cattle require. What nutrients are lacking in your grass? Is it protein? Energy? Vitamins? Minerals? All the above? The answer is, "It depends." It depends on forage type, time of year, age of cattle and stage of production.

Identifying the necessary nutrients to provide has to be done correctly if there is to be a successful supplement program. Why would someone feed cattle a high protein "hot mix" if their cattle are lacking energy? Why would someone feed a high-energy supplement if their cattle were obese? Certainly, no one really desires to over-feed or under-feed nutrients to their cattle. Yet, I see it quite often. More specifically, I often see cattlemen using inappropriate types of supplemental feeds to reach their goals. Then, unfortunately, the supplement itself gets blamed for the undesirable performance, even though the wrong type was used!

To illustrate, here's an extreme example: most folks would not feed a calf starter to an 1100 lb show steer. Why? Because a calf starter is not formulated to supply the proper amount of nutrients to this type steer at the calf starter's recommended feeding rate. If we provided the 1100 lb steer free-choice calf starter, he would eat it! Then, after a period of time, we would realize there is a problem. He wouldn't look or act the way we wanted

him to and we'd be the laughing stock of the county fair!

Examining this example, we did a few things wrong. We used a feed that was designed to be fed to a young calf that weighs 100-250 pounds. And, we fed the feed free-choice, when it was designed to be hand-fed at 1-5 pounds a day (our steer probably ate 25 pounds a day!). So, now our steer didn't make the show because he eventually got acidosis and lost weight and bloom. Where do we place the blame? The people who sold us the steer? They said he would gain 3-4 pounds a day. Blame the feed store? They said it was the best calf feed they carry. The feed manufacturer? Their feed did not perform to our expectations.



All of these problems would have been avoided by selecting a feed that matches the animals' needs and the goals you set. Selecting the wrong feed can cause a lot of unnecessary stress, problems, and expense.

So how to make sure this type of thing does not happen with your cattle? Go back to our original question: what nutrients are lacking in your grass? Supplements are used to "fill in" the nutrients that are lacking in our pastures. Further, we have to identify the cattle we are managing, as they may have different needs. It may not be appropriate to feed the same supplement to mature cows and growing heifers. Also, we can't expect the same supplement to perform equally for cattle on ryegrass versus bahiagrass. And finally, we can not assume that thin cattle will gain weight by feeding a supplement designed for maintenance of body condition.

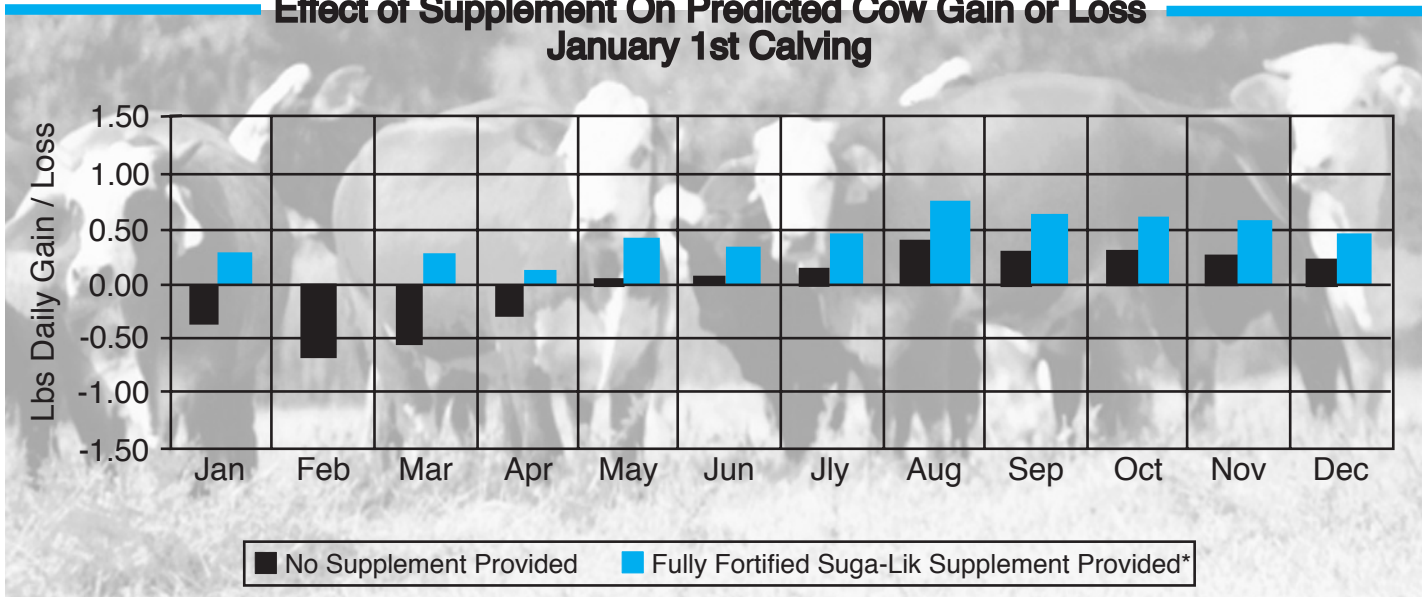
I occasionally meet cattle producers who have had disappointing results in their supplement programs. They tell me that their particular supplement did not work. Once I learn what class of cattle they were

supplementing, what type pastures they had and what supplement they fed, I can usually come up with the same conclusion. You guessed it! They were not using the proper supplement to match their goals. For example, they may have been expecting body condition improvement while feeding a supplement formulated for maintenance. Or, they may have needed a high intake product, but chose a supplement designed for low intakes. There are other examples, but the bottom line is that their supplement choice did not match their expectations.

U.S. Sugar formulates supplements designed for several different applications. This is because cattle,

pastures and goals are not the same at all cattle operations. We formulate supplements designed to produce growth. We formulate supplements for maintenance of body condition. We have supplements for both low-quality and high-quality pastures. We also formulate supplements for specific seasons of the year. We formulate supplements that have feeding rates from one pound per day to five or six pounds per day. We do this to give you the flexibility you need to supplement your cattle properly. It is our job to help you make the proper decisions when designing your supplementation program. Let us know how we can help you achieve your goals and expectations.

### Effect of Supplement On Predicted Cow Gain or Loss January 1st Calving



\*Fully-Fortified Suga-Lik® Supplements fed with predicted daily consumption: Jan. 6 lbs #500; Feb. – Mar. 6 lbs #509; Apr. 1.25 lbs #678; May – Jul. 1.125 lbs #678; Aug. – Dec. 1 lb #678. Total fed: approximately 830 lbs per cow per year. No need to provide free choice salt or mineral or any other kind of supplemental nutrients. These predictions are based on the average nutrient content per month of Bahiagrass.

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