Molasses Lick Blocks No Longer the Best Choice for Cattle

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Generations of cattlemen have used solid lick blocks made from urea-molasses, as a cost effective and convenient way of supplementing their herds when available forage was nutritionally inadequate. Supplement blocks have proven to be easier to ship, store, handle and distribute than liquids, and provide a simple free-choice method for delivering protein, energy, minerals and vitamins to cattle. But rising molasses prices and the option of non-molasses supplement blocks are giving cattle ranchers reasons to re-evaluate the type of blocks they use.

SweetPro 16 non-molasses lick block in 250 lb tub, made from distillers' grains.

> “Daily cost per head was less on the condensed distillers solubles blocks”

When cows ingest the simple sugars in molasses, it creates a lowered rumen pH that can lead to digestive disruption, health risks and economic disadvantages (Oklahoma State University study). Called the Negative Associative Effect, this decrease in rumen pH inhibits the optimal microbial population in ruminant digestive systems when they're fed forages. This can create health problems and cause the animals to eat greater amounts of forage or hay, in order to buffer their rumen pH back up.

Even when healthier supplement blocks made from condensed distillers solubles (CDS) were first introduced by SweetPro 20 years ago, the lower cost of the molasses blocks convinced many cattlemen to “stay with what they know”. But molasses block prices are now the same as the supplement blocks made from distillers grains. And a recent study by Dr. Gary Hill of the University of Georgia at Tifton, in collaboration with Dr. Abe Scheaffer working with SweetPro Feeds, identified performance and economic benefits to these CDS blocks that should get ranchers reconsidering their herd supplementation choices.

The 10-month University of Georgia study was completed in Fall 2011. It compared various factors for cow-calf herds feeding on forage and hay, versus herds on forage and hay plus supplements. The molasses-based supplement cost about the same per pound, and the CDS supplement from SweetPro outscored the molasses blocks with significantly lower consumption and better herd performance. The advantages of the SweetPro cattle blocks included:

- Daily cost per head was less than molasses blocks
- Daily supplement consumption was roughly half of molasses blocks
- Daily cow weight stayed higher than on molasses blocks
- Cows became pregnant faster than on molasses blocks
- Herd pregnancy rate was higher than on molasses blocks
- Daily calf weight gain was higher than when the mother cows were on molasses blocks

The SweetPro blocks are made from dried distillers grains and solubles, consisting primarily of complex

carbohydrates from corn, milo, barley, oats, wheat and flax, plus vitamins, minerals and the blend additive ProBiotein. Since these distillers feeds have already been fermented, the starches have been removed and there's no sugar content to negatively affect the rumen and drive down pH.

Condensed distillers solubles have similar binding and aroma benefits to molasses, but they are much higher in protein and fat than molasses. Protein quality and complex carbohydrate energy values are high, and their prebiotic fibers help keep the microbial populations in the rumen healthier. These factors contributed to the better performance of cow-calf herds on SweetPro blocks in the research project.

The University of Georgia study showed that even though consumption of the traditional molasses blocks was almost double that of the SweetPro blocks, the herd health and performance was better on the SweetPro blocks than molasses. Since molasses blocks cost about the same per pound, ranchers should expect the overall costs of their supplement blocks, shipping, storage and labor, as well as the time needed to handle the blocks to be considerably less by choosing SweetPro blocks instead of molasses.

COMPANY INFORMATION

SweetPro Feeds is a manufacturer of premium feed supplements for cattle, horses and other livestock, made from condensed distillers solubles – CDS. Our patented process in non-molasses free choice blocks uses dried distillers grains that are fermented by yeast. SweetPro products are high in enzymes, multi-class prebiotic fibers, volatile organic acids and our blend additive ProBiotein, which improve overall digestion and feed efficiency by up to 25%. Our supplements help your animals stay healthier and grow stronger by keeping their digestive systems performing the way that nature intended.

CONTACT DETAILS

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