How can so little do so much for your cow herd?
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We have all heard sayings like “a little dab will do ya”, “less is more”, “a little ______ goes a long way” or a number of others that refer to how a very small input can result in a large output or response! If you are interested in exploiting this concept when evaluating your inputs for the beef cow herd, there is no doubt you either are a low-moisture block (LMB) supplement customer currently, or should consider LMB supplements as an option for delivering supplemental nutrition.

What are some of the benefits of thinking small and why do these characteristics fit so well into a beef cow-calf production system? Beef cow herds are required to produce the calf crops that are eventually harvested as beef. Any extra resources that are expended to maintain a commercial cow herd over and above those required to raise a healthy calf to weaning age with an acceptable body weight, usually go unrewarded. This means that there is no financial benefit for overfeeding a cow herd.

Managing cow weight throughout the year is critical to the financial success of a beef cow-calf enterprise and matching cow requirements to forage growing conditions further minimizes the need for supplemental inputs. Beef cows will store energy by increasing their fat reserves with increased body condition when nutrient supplies exceed requirements and is typically observed during summer grazing when pastures are actively growing. Cows can rely on these body stores to help them through the winter periods when forage availability and quality usually diminish in order to perform at the required levels as described above.

This is where small strategic delivery of supplemental nutrition can help cows maintain their body weight more easily without furnishing significant quantities of the diet. The key dietary resource for most cow-calf systems is ample forage availability. As quality of forages fluctuate and diminish at the end of the growing season the most critical nutrient to help maximize forage utilization is protein delivery. Ruminants have a unique ability to extract energy by fermenting fiber from forages. A consistent supply of small quantities of nitrogen that is degradable in the rumen from free-choice protein supplements can be a highly effective way of optimizing rumen fermentation, low cost forages and ultimately cow performance.

The key for managing the beef cow herd is matching inputs that provide optimal production. Operations that optimize nutritional inputs for a beef cow herd rarely maximize cow body weight performance. Rather, optimal nutrition supplements provide the herd timely inputs that improve forage utilization so they produce a live, healthy calf that weans at an acceptable body weight, while maintaining a yearly calving interval. Heavy cows with excess body condition are not the target for profitable cow-calf herds.

What are the little things in CRYSTALYX® supplements that provide big returns?

1. CRYSTALYX® LMB supplements provide the first incremental units of nutrient delivery. This may not always maximize production responses but it provides supplemental nutrients that contribute to consistent, profitable results of a beef cow herd.
2. Reduced need for supplement processing, storage or delivery equipment. CRYSTALYX® supplements come ready to place in the pasture. No additional preparation, processing, shelf-life considerations or storage facilities are required. There is no need to spend extra capital in equipment or facilities for CRYSTALYX® supplements.
3. Self-fed supplement availability greatly reduces costs associated with more frequent feeding requirements of other supplement options. This advantage can be even more important during periods of inclement weather when feeding livestock is difficult and unsafe for producers.
4. Predictable intakes of CRYSTALYX® mean predictable and affordable cost per head per day without the worry of excessive consumption.
5. CRYSTALYX® is virtually waste-free. There are essentially no losses associated with feeding CRYSTALYX® LMB supplements under a variety of wet, windy, hot, cold or dry conditions.
6. Dehydrated molasses LMB products like CRYSTALYX® contain little moisture resulting in supplements with the highest dry matter delivery compared to other types in the market. This reduces transportation and handling expenses of supplements that contain higher levels of water.

If you are in the cow-calf business and are evaluating your supplementation program, consider how CRYSTALYX® LMB supplements can help you manage your cow herd body weight and condition without the significant investment in delivering other supplemental nutrition programs. While cost per ton is higher when compared to other forms of supplement, once you evaluate daily consumption, self-fed delivery, low requirements for other processing, storage or frequency of delivery costs, you will surely be surprised at the cost effectiveness of the CRYSTALYX® supplement program. You may even come up with a new saying - a little lick of CRYSTALYX® will do ya!

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