

## Strategic Summer Mineral Supplementation

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Most of our country this spring has been blessed with adequate to abundant moisture. This has really helped with the healing process from recent drought, but the old timers always said that wet years yielded lighter weaning weights. This is more than likely caused by abundant high fiber grass growth that becomes increasingly difficult for the calf to digest as the plant heads out and advances in maturity. The economics of creep feeding with Payback Creep Feed looks to be very favorable this year.

With these thoughts in mind I must remind everyone the importance of feeding free-choice mineral to the cowherd in the summer and early fall. The protein and energy in the green grass has improved the body condition of the cows but keep in mind that this improvement in fleshiness does not generally suggest that they are in an optimal mineral status. Trace mineral analysis of our pasture forages show that they are extremely deficient in copper, zinc, manganese and selenium even when the grass is green. As the grass matures and lignifies, the bio-availability of these trace minerals decrease. Also, some of the levels of macro minerals like phosphorus, which may have been adequate in green grass, become much lower than a lactating cow's requirement by mid July. Furthermore, as we get into summer heat, water caused antagonists like sulfates, iron, etc., may cause the herd's mineral status to be depleted even more. Do keep in mind that all of this is happening while the cow is going through involution, breeding, first trimester of pregnancy and lactation. These processes are very mineral dependant, and mineral status will certainly affect first service and total conception rates and weaning weights.

Very interestingly, several top Universities, including NDSU, is doing cutting edge research on the effect of positive or negative nutritional status during pregnancy (fetal programming) and its effect on the future performance, reproduction and health of the fetus from birth throughout its life.

Lastly, when feeding Payback Minerals in the summer, additive options may include:

- IGR Oral Larvicide for feed through fly control
- Aureomycin to aid in the prevention of anaplasmosis, foot rot, pink eye and summer pneumonia
- Ionophores for coccidiosis control and increased feed efficiency
- BioMos for improved weaning immunity
- And as always, Zinpro Chelated Minerals to overcome mineral tie-ups

In many situations, mineral supplementation may be the most neglected program on the ranch. Increased genetic potential for performance requires the need to maximize nutritional inputs in order to maintain economic sustainability. A proper Payback Mineral Program, that is designed to balance the inadequacies of the forage, is the cheapest supplement that a rancher will buy.