

**For Immediate Release
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Considerations for Managing livestock on pasture

The rains received in the past few weeks have been well needed and very beneficial. The green countryside is a pleasant change from the brown hills that were prevalent just a few weeks ago. Planting is winding down and nearly all of the cattle have been turned out on pasture for the grazing season. During this time, there are many issues and management strategies that still need to be addressed.

The rains that have accumulated were not the cure-all or the end of the drought, but they were sure needed and have gone a long way. The fact still remains that pastures have below average amounts of forage available. The reduction in available forage can be compensated for in many ways. The grazing duration can be shortened, stocking rates can be decreased, calves can be creep fed or early weaned, and livestock can be given a supplement; but be aware that high protein supplements can actually increase dry matter intake.

When it comes to supplement programs, there is something out there for “everyone”. Different companies have specific mineral products and regimens and all claim to have the best. This may be true for some people or situations, but what is best for your program? To start off with, you need to know what your livestock require and what is available to them from the forage in your pasture. If you do not know the mineral composition of your range, random samples can be collected and sent in for analysis.

After you have determined what minerals your livestock are most likely to be deficient in you can then move on with your selection process. The next question that you need to ask

yourself is what are the additives and products that I do/don't want my livestock to receive?

Ionophores have been shown to increase the efficiency of grazing cattle; however, they, as well as urea are extremely toxic to horses. Additionally, high amounts of copper can be fatal to sheep. Sugars are rapidly digested and absorbed for quick energy, while plant proteins are digested at rates similar to the forages.

The final factor that needs to be weighed is the relationship of cost and convenience of products. Sometimes, producers are faced with a decision to make. Do I go with the more expensive and convenient product or the more cost effective product that is exactly what I need but is an inconvenience to use? Before answering this question, you need to determine what the difference in price between alternative products is and then decide if it is worth your time. I hope that your decisions will allow you to have a successful grazing season.