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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rain, Rain and more Rain

While it seems that it may never stop raining, it could be worse. Yes we are dealing with delayed harvest of tobacco that is rotting in the fields, hay that can't be harvested, crops that are ready to harvest but the ground will not be ready for days IF it doesn't rain more in the meantime. Oh, and the mud. Yes, this week feeding, it seems like this should be April.

Then you have a fair going on in Brown County. As I type this, the parade was cancelled on Monday, and I am sure the tractor pulls, that draw so much of a crowd, are also in limbo. Hopefully the end of the week will be better weather.

As far as other areas, there are worse situations. Of course you would have to never see the news to not know about the issues with Florence that hit the Carolinas. Remember they measured the rainfall in feet. Other places are dry and in need of rain.

The Importance of Vitamins

So often I see white salt blocks out in a field of cows. Yes, they need salt and they like salt, but they need more than salt. Minerals and vitamins are combined with salt to feed livestock. This is usually fed free choice and the salt is usually what draws the cattle to it. If you are providing white salt blocks only your livestock are probably lacking in some vitamins. Even if you are feeding the combination of white salt blocks and bags of mineral, the amount consumed is less than what it is formulated for. Yes it is cheaper, but there is a price in saving that mineral cost.

The following explains the need for vitamins. It was in the Beef Blog on Tuesday, and was written by Jera Pipkin. This is titled "Vitamins, Part of Doing the Right Thing" can be found at <http://farms.com>

Like pieces of a puzzle, vitamins are essential in keeping cattle healthy year-round. Price spikes in the last year, however, have producers taking another look at how to fit savings into concerns about source and efficacy over time.

Jeff Heldt, with Micronutrients Intellibond, explored cost-effective vitamin and mineral strategies at the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand's Feeding Quality Forum this summer in Sioux City, Iowa. "Obviously, we all want to take care of our animals and do the right thing," he said. "But also, we need to think about our competitive advantage. Where can I save some dollars, or maybe where can I spend a few more dollars to make sure I'm doing the right thing?"

Heldt's comments were against a backdrop of recent shortages. Vitamin A prices skyrocketed 10-fold last fall after fire damaged a German factory that made precursors of A and E. The market finally returned to normal, after much study of alternatives. He drew a parallel to the industry's rethinking phosphate mineral requirements after the ingredient price spiked about 10 years ago.



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“Lo and behold, that 12% phosphorous mineral I’m feeding my cows got really expensive and I decided I better do something different,” Heldt said. “Now what’s the common phosphorous level in cow mineral supplements—4% to 6% maybe, and we seem to have gotten by just fine.” The extra amount was seen as a safety factor, but a price spike drove home the point, “more is not always better.” That’s true with vitamins as well, partly because the fat-soluble ones have a three- to six-month storage buffer in the liver, and the others, C and the B complex, cannot be stored in the body at all, Heldt explained. Vitamin A is the most critical for cow-calf operations, with its connections to reproduction and immunity. Particularly since the price spike, producers want to know what vitamins their feedstuffs are actually delivering and how to balance rations without unnecessary added cost, he said.

The National Research Council publishes recommendations but diets of “good green growing feeds” generally provide adequate vitamin A and E, Heldt noted, as does a ration of at least one-third corn silage and the rest grain. “If we’re just feeding all grain, we’re going to be short on the requirements.”

Vitamins are often part of a free-choice mineral supplement or premix where reading tags gives an accurate measure of the initial levels. Cattle need 40,000 IU of vitamin A each day and most mineral on the shelves today provides more than that. “Again, more is not always better,” Heldt said, but he allowed the safety margins help compensate for storage losses over time. Environmental factors like water and heat and light, from manufacturing to storage, pose a threat to vitamin efficacy. “For example, potency loss can double for every 25-degree increase in temperature,” Heldt said. Mineral source plays a role in the amount of vitamins delivered from the mix, too.

Vitamins that are organically sourced offer more stability, compared to those from oxide or sulfate trace minerals, he said. But storage time may be most critical. “There could be some of those products that we’ve got in our warehouses that don’t get fed for three or four months,” he said. “Is that realistic?” Producers should be aware of how long a product was warehoused before they buy and how long it may sit on their farm or ranch before it’s fed, Heldt reiterated. But first, evaluate quality and vitamin quantity of their forage.

“I want you to go home and as you’re driving back, think about what you’re doing and why you’re doing it,” he said in closing. “Make sure you’re doing the right thing.”

Dates to Remember

October 15 Pesticide Testing at the Old Y Restaurant at noon.

October 25 Beef Quality Assurance Training at the United Producers Stockyards in Hillsboro at 6:30 p.m. Call 393-3424 to register prior to the event. Meal starts an hour prior.