



## Using Lick Tanks to Supplement Grazing Cows

Lick-wheel tank feeders are designed specifically for self-fed liquid supplements, typically made from polyethylene, they are covered to maintain product integrity. Cattle access the supplement by licking a rotating wheel which is immersed in the liquid. A lick tank will typically have 2 or 4 lick wheels. Producers should allow 1 wheel for 20-25 head of cattle.

**Feeding a QLF free choice supplement in a lick tank offers several benefits to complement available forages:**

- Molasses based for palatability
- Highly digestible source of energy and protein
- Reduced labor and fuel use
- Cows will vary intake based on their requirements, forage quality and availability
- Cost effective protein supplementation
- NPN in the form of Timed-Release urea phosphate is slow released for enhanced nutrition and safety
- Lick tanks allow for several small meals over the course of the day and opportunity for less dominant animals to come to the feed unchallenged
- Supplementing cows on corn stalks with free choice liquid ensures they can consume enough protein to balance the low protein of the corn stalks.

**A summary of research done on free choice molasses based liquids fed to cattle on pasture:**

- Auburn University (Dawkins, 1987)
  - Stocker calves on low quality pasture gained an additional 114# when offered a liquid supplement in a lick tank compared to those that did not get a liquid supplement.
- University of Kentucky (Ely, et al. 1996)
  - Cows on fescue has improved Body Condition Score and 15# heavier calves at weaning when offered liquid supplement in a lick tank
- Montana State University (Earley, et al. 1999)
  - Pairs supplemented with lick tanks on late summer pasture had greater forage intake; the lactating cows gained an additional .27# per day and the calves gained an additional .67# per day compared to non-supplemented pairs.
- University of Florida (Arthington, et al. 2004)
  - Yearling heifers on winter pasture improved their pregnancy rate 50% when offered a molasses based supplement.

**Managing lick tanks for success:**

- Make sure cattle have plenty of access to fresh, clean water.
- Keep lick tanks at least 50 feet away from the water source and away from congregating areas.
- Make sure the cattle have plenty of forage available – QLF free choice supplements are designed to complement the forage program, not substitute for it.
- Offer an appropriate free choice mineral with salt
- Do not allow the lick tank to go empty between fills
- Make sure the lick tanks are clean and in good working order



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