



The Benefits of Free Choice Cow Supplementation

Beef cows have nutritional needs for energy, protein, minerals and vitamins. These nutritional needs are required for body maintenance, reproduction, lactation, fetal growth, etc.

As the grass on range and pasture matures during the grazing season, nutrient levels decline and digestibility is reduced.

Rumen microbes need sufficient protein for growth and reproduction. If protein is insufficient, the microbe population is reduced. This can result in lower feed intakes and poorer fiber digestion.

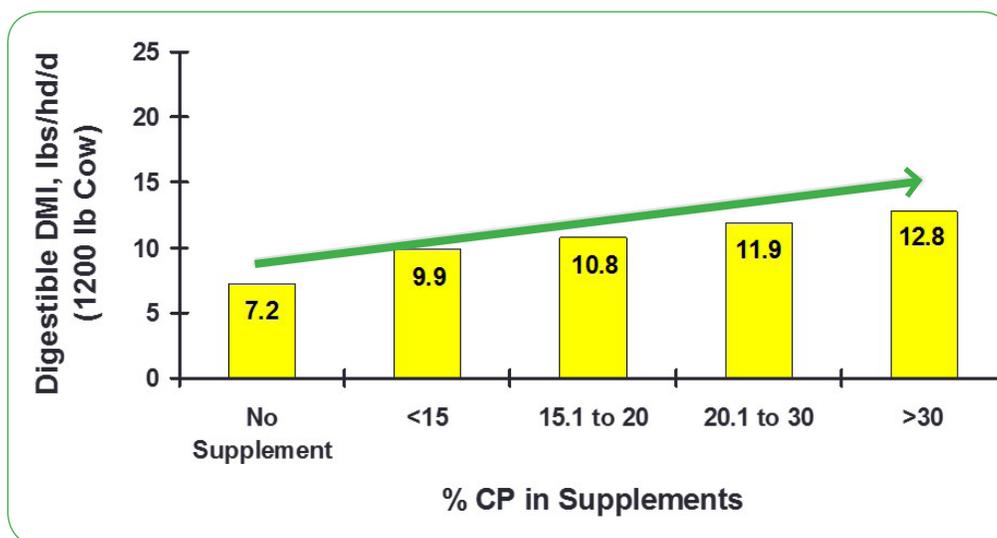
Supplementing protein to cows on mature grass or corn stalks will meet their protein requirement for maintenance and production. By improving the rumen microbe population it will also increase the fiber digestibility of the grass which improves the energy yield from the grass.

Feeding grain to cows on mature pasture or corn stalks can have the opposite effect. The starch in the grain lowers the pH in the rumen, which kills off rumen microbes and results in lower fiber digestion. Grain is also low in protein, which is what the rumen needs to feed the microbes.

Free choice supplementation of a QLF product spreads their protein intake throughout the day, allowing for improved rumen conditions. Hand feeding a supplement typically results in the cows eating their protein supplement in a short amount of time which can reduce its ruminal effectiveness. Free choice supplementation also reduces the labor of delivering hay or feed daily to the cowherd.

Placement of lick tanks with a QLF free choice liquid or QLF Ignite tubs in the pasture can improve grazing distribution across the pasture.

Kansas State University Summarized 141 observations in 31 different trials of cows on grass. As the protein level of supplement was increased both dry matter intake and organic dry matter digestibility were increased. When supplemental protein level was 30% or greater, the digestible dry matter intake improved 75% compared to no supplement at all.



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