

Maximize the Utilization of Feedstuffs

Beef producers will be challenged with extra feed costs through the rest of the winter and spring. Higher grain prices have pulled high and middle protein ingredients up as well. Forage prices are also higher and in some of our markets, snow and ice have put a stop to grazing winter forages and stalk fields.

Let's step back from that frenzy and talk about a few ways to maximize the utilization of the feedstuffs cattle are being fed.

- 1) Make sure protein supplement levels are adequate. Rumen bugs need protein to thrive and multiply. If rations are appropriately balanced for brood cows and feeder cattle, feed intakes will be maximized and performance will be enhanced through more energy intake.
- 2) Ionophores like Bovatec and Rumensin alter the rumen microorganism population to run more efficiently. Research indicates that cows can be 10-15% more efficient when fed ionophores.

So if we combine #1 and #2, proper protein supplementation increases intake, especially on low quality forages and ionophores improve the efficiency of energy utilization, a WIN-WIN combination for your producer's cattle.

- 3) If possible reduce particle size of the forage. Tub-grinding corn stalks, other crop residues and poor quality hay helps increase intakes and, when bunk fed, reduces waste compared to big round bales offered free choice. Feeding equipment and feed systems obviously play an important part in this decision.
- 4) Match products to cattle type and rations. Sometimes we get into the rut of having just one supplement product because it is easy and convenient. Evaluate your producer recommendations and make sure we are doing what's best for him and his cattle.

Helping customers work through the next few months' feed dilemma will pay dividends next summer.