

Jody Holthaus, Agent  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Livestock and Natural Resources

## May is Beef Month!

Every month is beef month on our farm! Every day, week and month, caring and thinking about our cows, as is every other farmer or rancher. It doesn't stop with our cows, when we're not thinking about the cows, then we're thinking about their pasture, their hay or their supplemental feed. Then there's their health programs and the genetics we are trying to get to. It's all a game, keeping all of the balls up in the air at once.

One of those management decisions at this time is mineral and vitamin supplementation while cattle are out to pasture. The three key minerals and vitamins for cows that utilize native range as predominate portion of the diet are phosphorus, Vitamin A and salt.

Phosphorus is particularly important to insure proper reproductive performance of beef cows. As such, with spring calving cows, making sure the cows have an adequate phosphorus supplement starting at least one month prior to calving and through the breeding season is important. Since most cows are wintered on dry grass or crop residue material which is fairly low in phosphorus, most producers will feed mineral supplement throughout the winter months. One key to proper feeding of phosphorus is to make sure the cattle are eating some of the phosphorus supplement: and to insure this, many will mix this with salt.

Vitamin A is generally quite high in forages during early lush growth. However, as the forage weathers and matures, Vitamin A levels decline. The time to make sure the cows are receiving supplemental Vitamin A is similar to phosphorus feeding in that they should particularly have adequate Vitamin A from calving through the breeding season. Vitamin A can be supplied either through a mineral mix, commercial supplements, alfalfa hay or through the use of injectable Vitamin A.

Salt should be self-fed year round and this is the typical approach taken by most producers.

**Grill some beef tonight and every night, celebrate our beef and those that care for them!**