

CHAPTER 8: Guidelines on the use of licks

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Licks serve only as a supplement of nutritional shortages in pastures and are not actual feed. Licks are recommended only when sufficient grazing and/or roughage are available.

CHOICE OF LICKS

The following factors should be considered when a lick is chosen:

- Quality and quantity of grazing/pasture.
- Type of pasture, e.g. sweet, sour or shrub veld.
- Production stage of the animal, e.g. lactating, dry or growing.
- Condition of the animal.
- Specific year; production years vary greatly depending on rainfall and climate.
- Infrastructure on the farm. It will determine whether lick blocks, ready-mixed lick, lick concentrate or a combination of licks should be used. Factors playing a role in this is the availability of lick troughs, equipment to measure and mix ingredients accurately, the availability of grain and other raw materials, labour, remote cattle posts and management time.

LICK INTAKE

The minimum and maximum lick intakes are prescribed for each product. The minimum intake applies to sweeter veld, while the maximum intake applies better to more sour veld. If the lick intake is too low, the palatability and availability of grazing are of such a nature that less lick is required. If the lick intake is too high, consider the following steps:

- Change to another lick or lick composition. Salt is used to partly control lick intake, but too high salt intake may harm animals. Finer salt controls lick intake better than coarse salt. An adult cow needs about 70 - 90g salt/day.
- Feed lime is sometimes used to control intake, but it is not recommended as high levels of calcium suppress the absorption of trace elements and therefore cause induced trace element deficiencies.
- Place lick troughs far away from water points.
- Limit intake by providing certain weighed quantities of lick two or three times per week.

UREA

Almost all licks and lick concentrates contain urea. Apply the following measures to prevent urea poisoning:

- Use licks only as prescribed.
- Avoid excessive initial intake by giving salt-hunger animals Voermol Rumevite 6P for the first 14 days.
- Limit lick intake, especially during scarcity of grazing, to the prescribed maximum level.
- Mix lick concentrates thoroughly.
- Protect licks containing urea from rain.
- Vinegar is an effective antidote against urea poisoning. Mix vinegar with equal parts water and dose a half bottle per calf or large sheep, and 2 - 4 bottles per head of cattle (1 bottle = 750 ml).