



Increase Your Stocker Cattle Profits with Sweetlix

By Jackie Nix, Nutritionist

Mild winters and an ample forage supply make stocker cattle a desirable enterprise in the South. Many producers are busily assembling groups of calves to utilize ryegrass pastures and small grains after row crop harvest. Sweetlix offers a simple, yet comprehensive stocker cattle supplement program designed to help keep calves healthy and to put extra pounds on your calves and dollars in your pocket.

Stress and Receiving Calves

Groups of calves that have been “put together” from the sale barns are severely stressed. Stress can be defined as a nonspecific response by the body to internal or external factors. Common stressors that receiving cattle face include: weaning, crowding, handling and transportation, lack of feed and water, exposure to disease, commingling, weather changes and processing procedures. Stress adversely affects calves in several ways. Stressed cattle have reduced weight gains (even weight loss in some instances), reduced feed efficiency, and increased susceptibility to disease and death.

Some stresses are unavoidable, while others can be eliminated or reduced with proper management. The stress of handling and transportation is largely induced by fear. To minimize this fear it is important to handle calves in a calm and quiet manner. Yelling, screaming, use of hot shots and hitting with sticks will create a bad experience and make future processing that much worse.

When possible, work calves in a well-designed facility that encourages smooth movement of cattle. Many facility designs and plans are available via the Internet and the Extension Service. Make sure that areas in which calves are worked have good footing. Avoid smooth concrete in working areas. All concrete surfaces should have grooves/texture for solid footing. Make sure that working areas are well lit and not in shadows. Cattle will balk at moving from well-lit areas into darkness but will move well from dark areas toward light. Blocking gates in the chute need to be “see through” so cattle can see animals ahead. Calves will balk if they see a dead end.

When transporting calves, minimize the amount of time held in a pen without feed or water. When gathering calves for transport, the truck should be ready to load as soon as calves enter the pens. Also, do not hold calves on a truck any longer than necessary. Unload as soon as they arrive at the new destination. Upon receipt, place calves in a relatively small trap pen with fresh, high quality hay and water as well as Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs and a high quality-receiving ration, if desired. Under normal conditions, receiving calves have been without food or water for an extended time prior to arriving at the farm. Additionally, most of these calves, especially those “weaned on the trailer” will be

Tips for Reducing Stress in Receiving Calves

1. Work cattle in well designed handling chutes (no dead ends, box corners or dark shadows)
2. Don't attempt to crowd too many animals in the crowd pen (it should be half full).
3. Work cattle calmly and efficiently (avoid use of hotshots and excessive yelling, and rough handling)
4. Provide clean, fresh water to calves upon arrival. Adjust waterer(s) to make noise so that calves will find them quickly.
5. Provide Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs to calves near waterers upon arrival and in sick pens.

unfamiliar with using the waterers and eating the feeds you offer. This reluctance to eat will create a vicious cycle. The less they eat, the more stressed they become. The more stressed they become, the less they eat. As a rule, calves' nutritional needs do not increase under stress, but since their total feed consumption is down, required nutrients need to be provided in a more highly concentrated form. One exception is potassium. Studies have shown that a calf's potassium requirements can increase up to 20% under stress. The challenge for a receiving calf nutritional program is to provide highly palatable feeds that stimulate intake, provide critical nutrients and allow the calves to begin to perform quickly. This is where the Sweetlix Stress-Lix tub is of benefit.

Why Sweetlix Stress-Lix Tubs?

Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs are the only supplement tubs designed especially for receiving cattle. These highly palatable tubs contain high levels of molasses to encourage consumption and also contain Diamond V[®] XP[™] Yeast Culture to stimulate the rumen and increase consumption. Enhanced mineral and vitamin levels help calves fight stress, including potassium. Organic trace minerals in the Stress-Lix tub have proven effectiveness in aiding the immune system. Proper mineral nutrition is important for immune function. Minerals are needed to manufacture antibodies. As antibody levels improve, so do the calves' ability to utilize medications and vaccines that may be a part of processing. In a limited trial conducted at the Alabama Farmers Cooperative stocker facility in Fayette, AL, the group of calves receiving Stress-Lix tubs had a lower "pull rate" (2.3%) than calves without access to Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs (4%). Healthier calves mean less medical costs and more total pounds of beef to sell, improving your bottom line.

The convenient, Stress-Lix block comes in its own 200 lb plastic tub so there is no need for expensive bunks or feeders. Calves will average about 4 ounces per head per day at an average cost** of \$0.07 per head per day. Provide calves free-choice access to Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs at receiving and up to 30 days (depending on your management schedule) also keep in sick pens for optimum benefits in stimulating appetite and supplementing required nutrients so that calves get healthy and stay healthy.

Use an Ionophore for Increased Feed Efficiency

Once calves are "turned around", processed, and eating properly, it is time to switch them to a supplement containing an ionophore for increased feed efficiency and weight gain. The ionophore monensin (Rumensin[®]) alters the population of rumen bugs to increase the amount of "good" bacteria and decrease the populations of "bad" bacteria. These "good" bacteria produce higher amounts of propionic acid. The reason this is important is that a calf uses acetic acid, butyric acid and propionic acid produced by the rumen bugs as energy. However, the calf is able to more efficiently convert propionic acid into energy than either butyric acid or acetic acid. More propionic acid means more energy for the calf, resulting in greater weight gains. The "bad" bacteria produce more acetic acid, butyric acid, carbon dioxide and methane resulting in more wasted energy from your forages.

Why Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks?

With so many options available, why are Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks the best option for stocker cattle operators wishing to feed an ionophore? Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks provide what is needed without the extra costs associated with unnecessary protein supplements. When high quality forages such as ryegrass and small grains are available to stocker cattle, the protein levels in these forages are typically adequate to meet the needs of growing stocker calves, so extra protein isn't needed. Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks provide a nutritionally balanced blend of minerals and vitamins in addition to Rumensin for added weight gain without the added cost of protein that you don't need.

Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks provide consistent daily intake resulting in maximum weight gains. Cattle can be expected to gain 0.20 to 0.25 additional pounds per day* as compared to calves receiving no

ionophore. Consistent intake also means that input costs are known, allowing you to accurately estimate operating costs and determine breakeven costs. The average cost** for Sweetlix® Rumensin® Blocks is \$0.09 per head per day. Assuming that the value of the extra gain is \$0.85 per pound, use of Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks results in an extra profit of \$0.08 to \$0.13 per head per day on stocker calves.

And probably the greatest advantage of the Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks is their ease of use. These weather-resistant blocks can be placed right out in the pasture with stockers. Maintenance merely involves keeping the proper number of blocks available to the calves at all times.

In conclusion, successful stocker management involves minimizing stress whenever possible; providing high quality concentrated feed sources early on to compensate for low consumption; proper mineral and vitamin supplementation to aid immunity; and use of an ionophore for increased growth once calves are turned around. A very effective supplement program includes use of Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs for up to the first 30 days and in sick pens to combat stress and help calves bounce back sooner. Once calves are turned around, Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks will increase feed efficiency and weight gain in stocker cattle for maximum profits. For more information about these supplement blocks and how they can benefit your stocker operation, call **your local Sweetlix dealer** or **Sweetlix at 1-87SWEETLIX**.

**While these results are typical, individual weight gains may be more or less than that stated due to differences in cattle types, environment, management practices, etc.*

***Prices may vary slightly according to location*

*Diamond V® is a registered trademark of Diamond V Mills, Inc.
Rumensin® is a registered trademark of Elanco Animal Health.*

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Sweetlix Stress-Lix tubs are highly palatable and help get stocker calves on feed more quickly, plus supplement nutrients needed for health and growth.