



Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Blocks Help Stocker Turn Green Grass into Greenbacks

By Jackie Nix

Stocker cattle are young, lightweight calves raised primarily on forage diets until they reach a desired weight. Once the desired weight is reached, they are either sent to a feedlot or retained as replacement heifers. Stocker cattle gain weight rapidly on high quality forages for a fraction of the cost of traditional grain-based feeding programs. Southern states are fortunate to have mild winters that are ideal for growth of high quality cool season forages for much of the winter. Popular forages for stocker operations are typically small grains (wheat pasture, rye, etc.) and ryegrass. When properly managed, these forages are usually more than adequate in protein and energy for growing cattle.

With cattle prices at near record highs, it makes more sense than ever to utilize growth promotants to maximize weight gains and thus returns. The growth promotant Rumensin[®] makes additional energy available to the animal through manipulation of rumen fermentation. Based on research growth trials, it can be calculated that the additional energy derived from feeding 200 mg of Rumensin[®] daily to growing calves is equivalent to the energy derived from roughly 1.0 lb of corn.

The Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Block is a convenient, economical method to deliver Rumensin[®] in addition to essential minerals and vitamins to growing cattle at pasture.

Why Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Blocks?

With so many Rumensin[®] supplement options available, why are Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Blocks the best option for stocker cattle operators wishing to feed an ionophore? The protein levels in high quality forages grown for stocker calves are typically adequate to meet the needs of growing stocker calves, so extra protein in the form of a medicated feed mixture isn't usually needed. Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Blocks provide a nutritionally balanced blend of minerals and vitamins in addition to Rumensin[®] for added weight gain without the cost of a protein supplement that you don't need.

Enhanced Mineral Nutrition

Minerals and vitamins are a very small and yet extremely important part of cattle nutrition. Minerals and vitamins play vital roles in growth, immunity and reproduction. Inadequate intake of any of the essential minerals and vitamins results in reduced feed intake, decreased average daily gains, inefficient feed conversion, poor immunity, and decreased reproductive performance. The result is cattle that don't grow or reproduce as quickly or efficiently as they could.

Recognizing the advantages of enhanced mineral nutrition in growing cattle, Sweetlix[®] has petitioned and received permission from FDA to enhance the mineral package delivered by the Rumensin[®] Pressed Block. Levels of copper, zinc and iodine have been greatly enhanced over previous levels (25 ppm Cu, 540 ppm Zn, & 48 ppm I vs. 1000 ppm Cu, 4000 ppm Zn & 140 ppm I).

Copper is essential for immunity and reproduction among other functions. Copper deficiency is a serious problem in grazing cattle. Copper deficient calves exhibit reduced immune function and poor thriftiness. They tend to get sick easier and stay sick longer than calves with sufficient copper levels.

Reproductive efficiency is also reduced due to low copper levels. Copper deficiency can result in delayed estrus, reduced libido, decreased conception rates, infertility and early embryo death. Thus proper copper supplementation is vital in replacement heifers.

Zinc is important for muscle production, maintenance of the gut lining, and bone and skin development. Zinc is also known to be essential for sexual maturity, and onset of estrus. Deficiencies will result in decreased fertility, skin problems, hoof and joint problems, and decreased average daily gain due to decreased nutrient absorption.

Iodine is necessary for formation of growth hormones secreted by the thyroid. Metabolic rate is directly related to the level of thyroid hormones. Deficiencies will result in reduced growth rate, stillbirths and abortions, abnormal estrus and reduced libido and poor semen quality in males. In severe deficiencies, the thyroid gland enlarges in an attempt to compensate resulting in the formation of goiters.

The Sweetlix® Rumensin® Pressed Block also delivers balanced levels of other essential minerals and vitamins necessary for growth and health including calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, selenium, and vitamins A, D and E.

Convenience

Sweetlix® Rumensin® Pressed Blocks offer ease of use that other supplements do not. These weather-resistant blocks can be placed right out in the pasture with calves and are easily moved in rotational grazing systems. Highly palatable Sweetlix® Rumensin® Pressed Blocks are designed to consistently attract calves in the pasture even under lush growing conditions. Maintenance merely involves keeping the proper number of blocks available to the calves at all times.

Sweetlix® Rumensin® Pressed Blocks provide consistent daily intake resulting in maximum weight gains. Calves will regularly consume 3.2 to 8 oz of block per head per day depending upon bodyweight. Cattle will gain 0.20 to 0.25 additional pounds per day* as compared to calves receiving no ionophore. This consistent intake means that input costs are known, allowing the stocker cattle operator to accurately estimate operating costs and determine breakeven costs. The average cost** for Sweetlix® Rumensin® Pressed 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 \$0.12 per head per day on these stocker calves.

Sweetlix Rumensin Blocks Pay. Do the Math...		
Cost of non-medicated mineral blocks	\$0.06/hd/day ** 120 days	\$ 7.20/head
Cost of Sweetlix Rumensin blocks	\$0.09/hd/day ** 120 days	\$10.80/head
Cost of Rumensin	\$10.80 - \$7.20	\$3.60/head
Added gain due to Rumensin	0.20 lb ADG * 120 days	24 lbs.
Added income due to Rumensin	24 lbs @ \$85/CWT	\$20.40/head
RETURN ON INVESTMENT	\$20.40/\$3.60	567%

Table 1. An illustration on expected costs and returns for Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Blocks.

In conclusion, lightweight stocker cattle have the ability to convert cheap forages into rapid gain. Use of the ionophore Rumensin[®] will increase the amount of energy available to the calves through manipulation of ruminal fermentation, thus resulting in increased weight gain and feed efficiency. Research has shown that stocker cattle gain an additional 0.2 to 0.25 lb* per head daily on average compared to stocker cattle that receive no growth promotant. The Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Block is an economical, convenient method to deliver Rumensin[®] as well as essential minerals and vitamins to stocker calves under pasture conditions. Sweetlix[®] Rumensin[®] Pressed Blocks pay for themselves in terms of increased gain and feed efficiency. For more information about these supplement blocks and how they can benefit your stocker operation, contact your local Sweetlix[®] dealer or call [1-877-SWEETLIX](tel:1-877-SWEETLIX).

Jackie Nix is a nutritionist with Sweetlix[®] (<http://www.sweetlix.com>). You can contact her at jnix@sweetlix.com or 1-800-325-1486 for questions or to learn more about the Sweetlix line of mineral and protein supplements for cattle, goats, horses, sheep and wildlife.

*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 will vary according to location

Rumensin[®] is a registered trademark of Elanco Animal Health, Indianapolis, IN

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