

How to supply basic minerals to stock BY PAT COLEBY

TIME AND AGAIN stock keepers find it difficult to comprehend that animals of all kinds from geese to camels to ordinary farm stock have a very good idea of which minerals they need, and will help themselves to minerals supplied. I have seen many different animals take straight copper sulphate when they need it! Human beings seem not to possess that instinct.

An alternative to licks, and a possibly easier and more efficient way of offering necessary minerals, is supplying the lick ingredients separately. It is less wasteful and, after the initial setting up, it is easier to service and to keep the ingredients replenished. We have not had a case yet where the stock will not help themselves to the minerals they need.

Method

The mixture can be offered in two banks of three or one long line of six containers. It should be made weatherproof, as wet minerals are not very appealing and could lead to wastage. Anyone with basic welding skills can make these frames by recycling odds and ends on the farm.

Find six food-grade 20-litre plastic drums. Cut off the tops (using a chainsaw is the easiest), make a frame for them and attach wheels so that they can be pulled around the paddock. My clients tell me that, rather than

attaching wheels, sleds often make them easier to manoeuvre.

If the containers are to be left in the paddock, a roof is desirable at a height to prevent stock from getting into the containers!

Use the same ingredients as the mixed stock lick, plus two additions, and put only one mineral or ingredient in each container. Thus the containers will contain:

- Straight lime
- Dolomite
- Yellow dusting sulphur (99 per cent)
- Copper sulphate (called bluestone in Australia)
- Seaweed (kelp) meal
- Coarse agricultural salt (unadulterated)

Other trade minerals (like boron) are best added to the feed if necessary. For cobalt it is best to consult my book *Natural Farming: a practical guide*. It is rare for either of these to be needed, and kelp has a reasonable amount of iodine in it. More information about the minerals is provided in my books, especially *Natural Farming*.

This method is superior to a lick for example on a property where magnesium is high, stock will not take dolomite and therefore the lick would not be touched even if they were lacking calcium (as in lime). Secondly, this method is not as labour intensive, as the containers can be topped up easily without moving from the paddock.



A useful alternative to conventional licks like this one.

Australian Stringhalt BY PAT COLEBY

THIS YEAR IS proving to be the worst year ever for Australian Stringhalt, and many vets do not seem to understand the cause.

Australia is a country that lacks calcium and magnesium, particularly the latter, in soils.

Founder (Laminitis), nery horse, open knees, bone deformities, soft teeth, splints and of course Stringhalt can all be attributed to low magnesium in the diet. Seventy per cent of magnesium is needed for bone growth, while the remaining thirty per cent is needed for neuromuscular transmission.

Stringhalt appears at present to be prolific upon the first growth after drought. A proliferation of magnesium-depleting weeds, such as capeweed and flatweed (false dandelion) are the worst. Horses eating these weeds succumb very quickly to Stringhalt.

The treatment I advise is two small low-protein feeds daily; add a heaped dessertspoon of dolomite, plus a dessertspoon of yellow sulphur to each.

Cider vinegar, with about two to three grams of copper sulphate dissolved in a little hot water daily, can be mixed through the above ration. About a kilo in total of oaten chaff, lucerne chaff and bran is plenty. Also feed the animal well-grown mixed hay, not predominantly lucerne or clover.

Cod-liver oil is also generally needed. Administer one dessertspoon of the oil twice a week, as well as an unlimited amount of seaweed meal daily, not mixed in feed, for taking as needed.

Magnesium Orotate produces excellent results; I suggest 6000 or 8000mg daily. Administering high magnesium must of course be stopped the moment improvement is held, as too much can be just as dangerous as too little. Several vets have agreed that the Minbal 4 in 1 injection used for cattle with milk fever also shows definite relief.

The most important thing to do first is to remove the horse from the paddock that caused the problem, and to make sure that the paddock is analysed and top-

dressed with the required amount of dolomite and gypsum needed to raise and balance the soil.

The bottom line is that prevention is better than cure. Without exception paddocks that have caused Stringhalt are in a shocking state of degeneration with incredibly low pH and with lime minerals dangerously out of balance.

Pat Coleby is one of Australia's foremost authorities on the topic of natural farming, having written, published and consulted widely on the subject. Natural Farming: a practical guide, her most comprehensive work, draws on fifty years of experience and broad studies on the basis of natural farming.

We welcome readers to submit farming tips, results of farm trials and practical experience, as well as recommendations for useful resources or other material of use. The best entries will be published in future editions of ACOM.