



## MINERAL & VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTATION ESSENTIAL PRE-TUPPING AND IN EARLY PREGNANCY

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The importance of mineral and vitamin supplementation is often underestimated until a deficiency manifests itself by which time both the animal's health and productivity will have deteriorated, often irreparably so. It is important to be proactive in your approach. Clinical signs of mineral & vitamin deficiencies within a flock include; poor intake, increased prevalence of foot problems, poor immunity, infertility issues, poor vitality of new born lambs, grass tetany etc.

Flock fertility is one of the key measures of success in sheep enterprises today. Achieving a healthy and prolific breeding season followed by a stress free and efficient gestation are key to maintaining a profitable flock. Supplementary nutrition during this period is key to ensuring the ewe comes into cycle quickly and effectively.

Healthy eggs are needed along with a stress-free environment within the womb to ensure fertilised eggs are held. This can only be achieved through effective supplementation of key minerals and trace elements such as Phosphorous, Selenium, Zinc, Cobalt, Vit B12 & Vit E.

Growth and prolificacy of a flock are both heavily reliant on nutritional inputs.

Minerals & Vitamins also play a key role in optimising lamb numbers, their vigour & vitality at birth, colostrum quality and also subsequent lamb growth rates. It is therefore important for the animal to receive a stable and consistent supply of such supplements to support these requirements. Through the use of free access bucket licks such as **Nugget 4-way sheep** or **Topflock Pre-tup**, we can ensure the animals performance is optimised.



# WHAT THE FARMER SAYS



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# MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR WEANLINGS AROUND HOUSING

*By Joe Naughton - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph:086 145 2586*

The main priority when managing weanlings around housing, for both suckler weanlings and bucket reared weanlings is to reduce stress because stress has a negative effect on immunity, leaving calves more open to disease.

## **Stress reducers include;**

- Practice gradual weaning in the case of suckler weanlings. Don't wean all weanlings the same day.
- Gradual housing - don't house all weanlings the same day. Gradually build up stocking levels within the pens. This will help facilitate better silage/meal intakes due to less competition and reduce the risk of pneumonia with lower stocking rates initially.
- Consider feeding silage outdoors if ground conditions are good enough. This will help weanlings transition over from grass to silage before housing.
- If dungs are loose after housing, feed straw to help them to acclimatize to their new silage/meal diet. Straw may need to be fed for up to 3-4 weeks at 0.5 to 1.0kg/hd/day.
- Feed meal - Weanlings ideally should be on meal for the last 4-6 weeks before housing to help transition calves to moving indoors. Ideally they should be on 2kgs of meal at housing. You will find meal feeding such as our **Super Weanling Crunch** really helps boost their immunity. This is available with **Lungbooster**, a natural additive that prevents the build-up of mucous in their lungs and airways, thereby really helping prevent the onset of pneumonia and other forms of respiratory challenge.
- Good ventilation is a must – see adjacent article.
- Sufficient feed space is of the utmost importance, so all animals can feed at the same time.
- Sufficient water supply, with regular monitoring of water troughs to ensure water supply is clean.
- An ad lib supply of fresh, good quality, dry forage is also of great importance around housing to encourage good intakes.
- Also, sufficient lying space and freedom of movement within the pens is important.
- Ensure that vaccines and worming is up to date prior to housing to reduce the risk of pneumonia and bovine respiratory disease. Close monitoring of weanlings after housing is important for early diagnosis of pneumonia or bovine respiratory disease, as early diagnosis is essential for successful treatment.
- In the case of bought in weanlings, avoid housing straight away if possible, it is better for weanlings to acclimatize to housing via buildings with access to outdoors.

# ADDRESS HOUSING FAULTS NOW TO OPTIMISE PERFORMANCE

By Sean Holian - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph: 086 832 5325

Winter indoor housing is a high-risk period for cattle and can be one of the most stressful times of the entire year. Changes in temperature, environment, housing and feeding can result in a depression of the immune system which coincides with an increase in the rapid spread of diseases, especially as the cattle are forced to live in much greater proximity to each other.

Lameness, pneumonia, lice, fluke, and worms are common problems associated with winter housing, not simply because of time of year but also because of ventilation, housing, environmental infection pressure, immunity, and other issues.

Nutrition may be compromised in some farms and fodder, especially silage, will vary in quality. It is extremely important on all farms to get your silage tested now for feed quality and if necessary, a mineral analysis also. Informed decisions can then be made on how to balance the animals diet with concentrates and minerals (if necessary) to ensure maximum thrive over the winter period. Silage analysis is often the best money spent on a farm each year as it allows you to address issues before they become a problem over the winter period.

Some of the most common problems with animal winter housing can be solved by minimising moisture and optimising fresh air. Moisture comes from the animals in the form of

faeces/urine, at a rate of up to 45 litres per animal per day. Respiration can be responsible for emitting up to 10 litres of moisture per head per day. There is also the issue of moisture arising from overflowing water troughs / leaking downpipes & indeed rainfall that entering sheds.

Moisture in the shed supports microbial activity and promotes respiratory pathogens. It absorbs energy, requiring the animal to use more energy to stay warm instead of using this energy to grow and thrive. Moisture can be a medium for disease to pass from one area to another, infecting more animals on the way.

A constant flow of fresh air is vital to every housed animal's well-being. Not alone does it flush out pathogens, it is also essential to keeping the shed environment dry. In order to create a healthy airflow, there must be adequate air inlets & outlets. The inlet area is very important and should be at least twice and up to four times the area of the outlet. Yorkshire boarding is excellent for inlet as it provides access for air to get in while preventing rain from entering the shed. Sheds should all be draught free at animal level. If there is a draught, a row of bales blocking the draught could be a cheap way to solve the problem. Ensure your shed is fresh and not warm or cold to ensure cattle perform to their potential this winter.

