

Apple cider vinegar: A magic potion for cattle health?

By ALAN NEWPORT

WILL Winter ascribes almost magical properties to unpasteurized apple cider vinegar, and plenty of producers support his claims.

Generally, Winter suggests feeding apple cider vinegar, or ACV, as a supplement much or all year, to all farm animals older than 3 days of age. He says for ruminants, in particular, it improves forage digestion, helps prevent disease and has direct nutritional value.

Some beef producers use ACV during receiving time for stockers, prior to breeding season for their cow herd, or during other times of stress. Regardless, hundreds of producers use it as a sort of nutritional tonic and say the material is well worth its cost of about 3 cents per ounce.

One reason ACV works so well in the bodies of animals, Winter says, is because it is primarily acetic acid, a natural volatile fatty acid that is found throughout mammalian bodies.

Many beef and dairy producers use

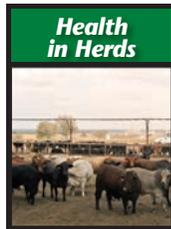
ACV to buffer alkaline rumen conditions, and Winter says it can also help buffer acidic rumens. He says this seeming paradox might be explained this way:

In some cases, the ACV is working against what some call the “funny protein,” or high-nitrate toxicity of lush grass, not by buffering pH per se, but by direct mitigation of the high nitrogen itself.

Winter says ACV also mitigates many other forms of pollution and toxicity. One of the most significant is mold mycotoxin, a huge immune-system crippler and often a factor in such things as high somatic cell counts, mastitis, foot rot, pinkeye, tetanus and anaplasmosis.

He adds that ACV is a “low-molarity” acid compared to sulfuric, hydrochloric and some other acids. Molarity refers to the concentration of the solute in a solution — more or less, the strength of the chemical.

Further, ACV contains beneficial microbes, minerals, vitamins and “nutraceuticals,” a term which combines the words “nutrients” and “pharmaceuticals.” Among the benefits that commonly spring from



IN WATER: A common way beef producers dose unpasteurized apple cider vinegar to cattle is through their water. They either dump it straight in or use a small injector.

these compounds, Winter says, are more efficient forage digestion and decreased forage consumption. ACV also tends to work as a “digestive tonic,” he notes, helping prevent scours and bloat.

Another miracle effect of ACV is that it can help prevent or remove parasites, both internal and external, Winter says.

Of course, all these responses are stronger when combined with good nutrition, good mineralization, and overall good stress and environmental management, Winter says.

ACV is palatable to most animals, and they may consume more when offered free choice than when controlled by dosage. Free choice is a good way to supply ACV for therapeutic or healing purposes.

Dosing can take many forms. When *Beef Producer* visited Pat Guptil’s ranch in South Dakota last summer, he was giving his cows and calves ACV free choice in the pasture simply by pouring it into a mineral lick tub. Guptil said his cattle varied their consumption quite a bit over a period of days, and he was pleased with the apparent benefits — among them, fly control and improving generally poor appearance, perhaps from a mineral deficiency or excess.

Many producers put ACV in the water

supply, either by dumping it straight into the tank once or twice per day or by using injectors in the line just ahead of the tank.

Although ACV typically won’t freeze as quickly as water, it will freeze solid in extremely cold weather. Winter suggests this method of dosing during extremely cold temperatures: Pour ACV onto hay, silage or a concentrate feed. He also notes mixing it with molasses at a ratio of 7-3 will lower the freezing point and add dietary energy.

Winter says a maintenance dose for cattle is 1 ounce per 250 pounds of body weight or a little less. This implies a rate of 4 ounces for a 1,000-pound cow. Winter, however, typically recommends 3 to 4 ounces per cow per day.

For stocker calves, he suggests a maintenance dosage of 2 ounces per day. For receiving stressed stocker cattle such as sale-barn calves, he advises 1 to 6 ounces a day in a drench with water at an equal rate.

When purchased in bulk, such as from Wick’s Livestock, ACV is delivered by the pallet. It costs \$4 per gallon for regular or \$6.50 per gallon for organic. It comes in either 55-gallon barrels or 275-gallon totes. Shipping on one pallet for four barrels or one tote runs \$100 to \$300, depending on your location.



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