

The difficulties with mineralising sheep

Mineralising cattle is easy; you can put it on their feed. Cattle are usually housed or kept in an enclosed area. They are fed everyday, which makes monitoring intake easier.

So why are sheep so different? We need to look at the whole picture before we can decide on the best approach. There are several different methods available.

1. You can put a mineral in feed through a compound or home mix. The home mix you have more control over as you are in charge. In a compound it is up to the manufacturer and is it what you really need?
2. Feed blocks are commonly used enabling you to feed earlier and longer before going onto a compound. But how many sheep use them?
3. Mineral buckets are just what they say and should not be confused with a feed block. Again are all the sheep using them and are minerals correctly balanced.
4. Liquid feed can be messy and expensive and is very similar to a feed block.
5. Boluses are another option, which many prefer but come with their own problems. A sheep's rumen is badly designed for a bolus and if the animal is on a high fibre diet it can easily be regurgitated. Again it is something else to do when handling.
6. Bullet or needles only cover 1 trace element and means handling again.
7. A liquid drench means handling again, but it does give your sheep the complete range of trace elements and vitamins, which the animal would otherwise not receive. They are however a short-term boost, which lasts between 2-3 months. Again do all your sheep require it? What about the major elements, are they in your drench.

8. Free access minerals contain both major and trace elements together with some vitamins, and on the face of it seem perfect. But again will all the sheep take advantage of them. Palatability is a real problem, but if overcome is this the answer?

All the above work, but are they right for your set up? To my mind it has to be a combination of the above products. But how will you know if you don't know what is lacking to begin with? A forage analysis is a good place to start. What it gives you is a clear picture of what your mineral status is and will highlight what is low and what antagonists are present.

This is what MVT (Scotland) Ltd does on a daily basis, take it back to the beginning and work hard with you to get it right.

If this has been of interest and you would like to find out more, please feel free to contact us with no obligation.



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