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What Does It Cost?

Factory A makes a gadget and they know down to the penny, what it costs them to make that gadget. By knowing their costs, they can then price it to make a profit or try and decrease their costs to make an even bigger profit. It's pretty cut and dried for them.

Farm A produces beef calves to sell each year. They have no idea what it costs them to produce a pound of beef. Oh, they know their feed costs, land rent, animal health costs, but there are so many other things to consider. Machinery costs, depreciation and labor, to name a few.

Dr Kevin Herbel, KSU Farm Management Director will be speaking at the Glacial Hills Resource center, 913 Dakota Street in Sabetha Kansas on April 2, 7 p.m. He will tell us about the high, low and average cost herds in Kansas. We will discuss the benchmarks to stay profitable and how you can determine your cost of production.

Grass tetany is also called grass staggers because when cattle become susceptible they start to stagger around and will go down on their side. One of the first symptoms is general lack of coordination.

Most of the time tetany will happen when cattle are on lush forages. While transitioning from winter to spring, nutrients, including potassium, are being pumped up from ground through the roots to support plant growth. When we have a few weeks of warm weather, those nutrients get pumped up to the plant that is above ground, actively growing. But if a cold snap or cool weather sets in, growth pauses but those nutrients remain in the plant. With those warm weather/cold weather cycles, the potassium levels can potentially become twice the amount they normally are, leading to tetany challenges when you turn your cows out around May 1.

Since tetany is a nutritional issue, it isn't isolated to just the spring and summer when we turn cattle out to grass; It can also happen while feeding hay. In that case, we have what might be referred to as "winter tetany" or "wheat pasture poisoning" when cattle are fed harvested winter feeds that are high in potassium.

There is no perfect mineral for preventing grass tetany. If you have extremely high potassium level, it is important to realize that a higher percentage of magnesium doesn't always mean it is better. Magnesium isn't palatable, and cows will likely walk away from straight magnesium or minerals with slightly higher levels of magnesium.

Start increasing magnesium levels about two weeks before turning out to pasture so you can gauge how much the cow might eat when she is turned out on grass. Remove all other sources of salt so that forces the cows to get salt from the mineral if the bitterness of higher magnesium restricts intake to less than the restricted amounts.

Feeding a high mag mineral during the high-risk periods such as spring and fall when the growing season can easily be disrupted will prevent the vast majority of issues.