Feeding Citrus Molasses as a Winter Supplement

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With the citrus season gearing up for the winter harvest there may be many opportunities for cattlemen to purchase citrus molasses for use as a winter supplement for the cow herd. Several studies have been conducted by University of Florida researchers which made direct comparisons between citrus and cane molasses.

Dr. Herb Chapman fed citrus and cane molasses as energy supplements for yearling steers grazing St. Augustinegrass pasture grown on organic soil at Belle Glade. Under these conditions St. Augustinegrass contains sufficient protein to meet the needs of the growing steers and molasses did not need to be fortified with urea or natural protein. Steers ate 7.7 pounds per day of citrus molasses and gained 1.1 pounds per day. Steers ate 6.8 pounds of cane molasses and gained 1.1 pounds per day.

Mr. Sloan Baker at Quincy and Dr. Gordon Kirk at Ona compared citrus molasses to cane molasses in finishing diets fed to yearling steers. At Quincy, steers were fed 40% molasses product in a ground ear corn finishing diet, and at Ona, steers were fed 29% molasses product in a citrus pulp finishing diet. Both studies showed that citrus molasses and cane molasses were of equal value when included in finishing diets that produced daily gains of 2.3 pounds per day.

Standard values for citrus molasses should be 71O brix, 65% dry matter (35% moisture) and 45% total sugars. Standard cane molasses contains 79.5O brix, 70% dry matter (30% moisture) and 46% total sugars. The feeding value of a molasses is directly related to its degree brix, dry matter content, and total sugar content. Its value is indirectly related to its moisture content. A situation with much of the citrus molasses produced today is that it has relatively high moisture levels because it is currently expensive to remove the water. Today's citrus molasses can contain 50 to 70% water. This high-moisture citrus molasses is acceptable for use as a winter supplement for cattle, but the price should be adjusted downward to compensate for the higher water content. So compensated, citrus molasses can be an excellent buy.

Citrus molasses is an acceptable ingredient for formulating liquid feed to be fed to Florida cattle. Citrus molasses should be acceptable for making slurry mixes, but citrus molasses containing high levels of moisture may be too thin to hold dry ingredients in suspension. Cattlemen making molasses slurry mixes with citrus molasses should
monitor the possibility of ingredient separation. Mixing thin citrus molasses with heavy millrun cane molasses to make a thicker liquid is a potential solution.

Cattlemen purchasing citrus molasses should obtain an analysis sheet which lists degree brix, total sugars, total solids, and/or moisture. From these values, the feeding and dollar value of citrus molasses can be established in relation to other molasses products.

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact Findlay Pate