Field Observations on the Use of a New Natural Supplement for Finishing Steers

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Introduction

There is a strong market for naturally fed cattle in the region. Feedlot operators are searching for products that can be added to the finishing diets to support the genetic potential for growth of these calves. This field trial compared a conventional ionophore with a new natural supplement for finishing cattle, Rumatec® Finisher.

Procedures and Observations

Backgrounded steers calves (n = 70, avg. wt. = 934 lbs.) from the Carrington Research Extension Center cow herd were weighed and randomly allotted to two pens (35 head per pen) for finishing. An ionophore (Rumensin®, Elanco Animal Health, Indianapolis, IN) treatment (300 mg/hd/d monensin sodium) or a natural supplement (Rumatec® Finisher, Ralco Nutrition, Inc., Marshal, MN) treatment (.5 oz /hd/d) was assigned to each pen. The natural supplement was formulated with diatomaceous earth, alpha-hydroxy propionic acid, cobalt carbonate, fenugreek, processed grain by-products, dehydrated brewers' yeast, yucca schidigera extract and mineral oil. The ration formulation was 53.3% dry-rolled corn, 15.5% wet distillers grains, 13.7% dry-rolled field pea, 7.8% corn silage, 7.4% chopped straw and 2.1% supplement on a dry matter basis for 62 Mcal/lb. diet at 13.8% crude protein. Steers were weighed approximately every 28 days and marketed at Tyson Fresh Meats, Dakota City, NE. This was a non-replicated study as pen availability was limited during the time of the study so it is not possible to conduct comparative statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

Dry matter intake averaged 22.09 lbs. for the ionophore group and 21.85 for the Rumatec® pen during the 5-month study. End weights were similar with ionophore steers averaging 1338 lbs. at harvest vs. 1344 lbs. for the Rumatec® Finisher steers. Average daily gains were the same at 3.60 for the ionophore and 3.59 for the Rumatec® Finisher steers. Feed per unit gain averaged 6.34 lbs. of dry matter per pound of gain for the ionophore group and 6.25 lbs. for the Rumatec® pen over the entire length of the study. While ionophores are widely used for conventional feedlot production, the observations of steer performance in this field study suggest that this natural supplement may be useful for finishing steers into the natural market. Additional data on the use of Rumatec® Finisher and Rumatec® β Starter in feedlot research trials can be found in the 2008 NDSU Beef Feedlot Research Report.

Steers on the trial to evaluate a natural supplement.