

Livestock Research Protocols

Alternative Free Choice Minerals for Goats, Spring and Summer 2015

Objective: To determine if there are quantifiable health benefits in goats provided free choice minerals and kelp versus standard mineral blocks.

Farmer-cooperators, Cheryl and Mike Hopkins will:

- Feed the same group of goats different mineral mixes over 5 week periods throughout the grazing season using a portable, sheltered trough feeder.
- Feed a salt block for one week between 5 week mineral treatments.
- Mineral treatments will include a mineral block, loose mineral mixes and kelp.
- Take observation of herd health signs during each mineral treatment: hoof health, hair coat, body condition scores (BCS) and general health observations.
 - BCS at least 5 adult animals from each treatment group, at least once a month. BCS is on a 1-5 scale; 1=emaciated and 5=obese. Score the same animals each time.
- Take observation of animal behavior during each mineral treatment: consumption rate, pica (consumption of odd or unusual things), and/or avoidance of certain minerals.
 - Mineral blocks or loose minerals will need to be weighed before and after treatment period to calculate consumption rate.
- Note the amount and price of purchased and consumed mineral, and the rate of supplementation.
- Take FAMACHA scores throughout the grazing season, at most every two weeks.
- Keep grazing records.
- If fecal egg counts are taken, make sure to record date and current mineral treatment.

May 23	Mineral block
June 27	Salt block
July 4	Loose mineral treatment #1
August 8	Salt block
August 15	Loose mineral treatment #2
September 19	Salt block
September 26	Loose mineral treatment #3



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Practical Farmers of Iowa will:

- Monitor progress of project and provide support when needed.
- Analyze the data, compile with past data and write an updated report.
- Publish results in a PFI research report, on PFI website and potentially other outlets.
- Pay the Farmer Cooperator a fee of \$550 at the conclusion of the project in 2015.