

Supplemental Vitamins and Minerals

OMGP Education Article November 2006

I once heard Cliff Burke say that in order to keep his goat operation afloat each of Ewetopia's does needed to produce two healthy kids. One of these kids would pay for the doe's upkeep and the other would be income. Sage advice to ponder for both large and small farmers. Our hopes and dreams are based on healthy, productive animals.

I briefly mentioned the use of injectable selenium and vitamin E in my October education article. For lack of knowledge of any other brand name, I will use the label of BOSE. This is the common brand dispensed by veterinarians in our areas.

Our goats have nutritional requirements just as we do. Because our herds, for the most part 'eat locally', they are not ingesting enough selenium in most feeds that we provide for them. I know that we are all more conscientious about providing trace minerals to our flocks. Many of us have also moved on from corn and other grain mixtures to more of a 'total feed'. By this I mean pellets that are considered to be complete feeds. All that we have to do is add hay for roughage. This is all and good for the non kid bearing adults on our farms but pregnant does and newborn kids are a different story.

Pregnant does need all the help they can get to not only have healthy gestations but also vigorously complete kiddings. Selenium and vitamin E are essential for a uterus that will not only expel the kids in a timely manner but also finish the job by releasing and passing the placenta. A sluggish delivery can result in the kids being oxygen deprived. It can also leave a doe exhausted and unable to tend to her kids as she should. Not a very productive situation. To ensure that a pregnant doe is receiving enough selenium and vitamin E it is thought necessary by the latest research to add injectable BOSE in the last 4 weeks of your doe's pregnancy. This will supplement what the doe is taking in from the feeds that you provide. We all know that some goats are picky about what they eat. We also know that there is a pecking order in our herds that keeps some of our animals from even being able to access what we supply. This computes to some of our herd being very well nourished and others being left with a less than ideal intake. If you are not already giving BOSE in these last crucial weeks, it is definitely worth thinking about.

This brings us to the kids. If a pregnant doe is deficient in selenium, you run the risk of the kids being born with 'white muscle disease'. These kids can have profound muscle weakness, stiffness of joints, low birth weight and will not grow at a normal rate despite any interventions you might do after they appear. These symptoms can range in severity. You may have kids that just are not putting on weight the way they should but appear normal in other ways. It is imperative for good production that kids be vigorous at birth. Able to stand and get to the udder for the colostrum is the main goal. Ideally they should not need help from you to go about the business of surviving. It is a good bet that if you supplied your doe with a booster of injectable selenium in her last weeks, the transition

process will go smoothly. Your veterinarian may recommend supplemental injection of BOSE for the kids as well just to encourage ongoing vigor.

Although selenium is the primary trace mineral that when missing or deficient can cause heartache for goat producers, other vitamins in the form of E, A and D are also essential in the uptake of the trace minerals into the goat's system. E and A are present in most quality forages. The key word here is 'quality'. Make sure that you are providing sun cured roughage in the form of mixed hay to your producing animals. Vitamin D is provided by the sun as well as being present in sun cured hay. In our dark, cloudy environment here in the Northwest, animals need to be out of the barn as much as possible to absorb what little the sun offers in the wintertime. It may seem the right thing to do to keep in your newborns when it is cold and dreary out but they really need the exposure to build strong bones.

May this help you in the upcoming kidding season. Contact your veterinarian. Most will dispense a big bottle of BOSE with dosage information. Your herd deserves it!!