

## LIMITING STRESS AND INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY DURING FLY AND WEANING SEASON IN CATTLE

WRITTEN BY: MEGAN COLL

Fly season is here again, and while these insects may be small, they can have a significant economic impact on your herd.

### Understanding the Main Fly Threats

#### Horn Flies

These small, gnat-like flies are the most economically damaging of the four main species you may encounter. They cause irritation, blood loss, reduced grazing efficiency, and spread diseases such as pink eye and anaplasmosis. **These flies take up to 20-30 blood meals per day and are generally host-specific.**

#### Stable Flies

Stable flies typically target the legs and lower body of cattle. They cause restlessness, decreased feeding efficiency, weight loss, and bunching behavior (cattle grouping tightly together to avoid bites). This can lead to heat stress and decreased productivity.

#### House Flies

While house flies do not bite, they create issues by feeding on manure and acting as carriers of bacteria that can lead to infections.

#### Face Flies

Face flies feed on eye and navel secretions, making them a major contributor to pink eye—a contagious, painful, and costly condition.

### Economic Impact of Fly Infestations

Moderate to heavy fly infestations can cost beef producers an average of **\$30-\$50 per head per year** due to lost performance and health issues. This can translate to **0.3-0.5 lbs of lost gain per day**. Controlling horn flies alone can increase weaning weights by 10-25 lbs.

Example:

- 100-cow operation with poor fly control
- Average loss: \$40 per head per year
- Total loss: \$4,000 annually



## Feed-Through Fly Control Options at AgCentral

### Loose Mineral

- Purina WR Hi-Mag 4 CP Mineral with Clarifly: \$34.90
- Purina WR Hi-Mag 4 CP Mineral with Availa 4 and Clarifly: \$44.50
- Purina WR Hi-Mag 4 CP with Aureomycin 5600 Clarifly: \$45.50 (VFD Required)

### Tub Form

- CrystalLyx Blueprint Fescue Tub with Shade and Clarifly: \$165
- Co-op Min-Lyx Hi-Mag Tub with Clarifly: \$142.99

### Pressed Block

- Sweetlix Clarifly Pressed Block: \$14.99

## Managing Stress During Weaning and Receiving

Utilizing tools such as stress tubs during weaning and receiving can have a meaningful economic and performance impact. Benefits include:

### **Faster Intake and Improved Feed Consumption**

Low-moisture, molasses-based products are highly palatable and encourage licking behavior, increasing saliva production and providing a calming effect.

### **Rumen Stabilization**

Added yeast and probiotics help maintain a healthy rumen environment, supporting proper pH balance, fermentation, and microbial activity for improved digestion and nutrient absorption.

### **Reduced Stress-Related Health Issues**

Highly available trace minerals and added Vitamins A, D, and E help boost immune function, reducing treatment rates and minimizing lost gain.

## Performance Benefits of Stress Tub

Studies show **stress tubs** can result in:

- 0.2–0.5 lbs/day additional gain
- 5–15% lower treatment rates in the first 30–45 days post-weaning

### **Example:**

- $0.25 \text{ lb/day additional gain} \times 45 \text{ days} = 11.25 \text{ lbs added weight}$
- $11.25 \text{ lbs} \times \$3.50/\text{lb (average market price)} = \sim\$40 \text{ additional value per head}$

With an average cost of \$8–\$25 per head for 45 days, stress tubs provide a strong return on investment based on weight gain alone.

### **Stress Tub Options at AgCentral**

- CrystalLyx Brigade Tub (200 lb): \$152.99
- Purina Stress Tub 2.0 (225 lb): \$229.99

## Additional Support Tools

Incorporating electrolytes can also positively impact calf health and performance during both weaning and receiving periods. **Contact your nearest AgCentral location to find the products best suited for your operation's needs and don't forget to ask about quantity discounts!**