



a'Round The Traps'

Nutrition in Pastures

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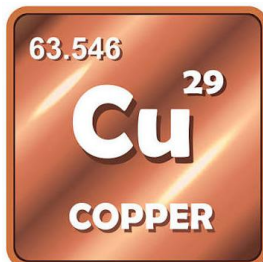
September 2026



FERTI-TECH

Beefing up with Minerals

Across Southwest WA, low levels of Selenium, Copper, Zinc and Manganese in the soil are well recognised. What is less well understood is how these mineral deficiencies can affect the animals grazing those soils — and importantly, how a mild deficiency can affect animal performance before obvious symptoms appear. Below, we touch on the main issues we see in WA and Tasmania and some other parts of the nation.



**Copper
Deficient
Cattle**

Copper

Copper deficiency can often be recognised by changes to the animal's coat. In cattle, affected animals may develop a brown or reddish tinge to the hair, along with a rough-looking coat. This can be particularly noticeable in calves.

Other signs can include loss of hair pigment around the eyes, giving the animal a distinctive "spectacle" appearance. Less obvious effects can include reduced growth rates, poor bone development, lameness and diarrhoea.

In sheep, the symptoms can be less obvious, particularly in shedding breeds. In Merinos, a Copper deficiency may present as a steely or wiry-looking fleece, along with reduced growth and bone development and lameness.

Another reported sign of Copper deficiency is animals chewing or eating bark from trees in the paddock.

Zinc

Zinc plays an important role in skin, hoof and bone development. Unlike Copper, where a change in coat colour can be a noticeable symptom, Zinc deficiency is more commonly associated with hair loss, skin problems and dermatitis.

More severe deficiencies may contribute to skin lesions, hoof inflammation, lameness, as well as reduced growth and development.

Manganese

Manganese is particularly important for young animals, with deficiency affecting bone formation, growth, and development.

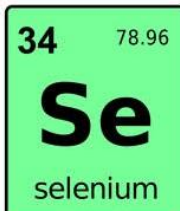
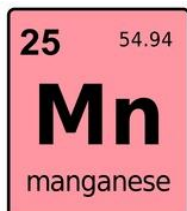
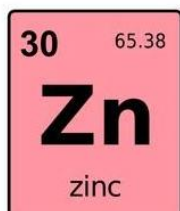
Calves can be affected most noticeably, with poor bone development contributing to difficulties standing and walking.

One of the more distinctive signs in calves is an obvious protrusion or misalignment of the teeth, associated with underdevelopment of the nose.

Selenium

Selenium deficiency can be particularly noticeable in calves, where white or pale scours may occur. Another symptom of Selenium deficiency is retained placentas.

Another recognised symptom is stiff-legged or stilted gait, which can occur in both cattle and sheep.



Test Before You Treat

Commonly used pasture fertilisers don't always contain these trace minerals, so it is important to understand what is actually available to the animal through the pasture and overall diet. Ferti-Tech can organise for anything to be tested with our network of experts, including the quality of any Pasture, Fodder or Grain. We also provide our **CSA Feed Test Analysis Report Content Summary Paper**. One of the best ways to understand the mineral status of a herd or mob is through appropriate animal testing, including blood testing where indicated. Once the mineral status of the animals is understood, there are a range of options available to address deficiencies. These may include mineral injections, boluses, stock licks, liquid supplements added to water, grain or hay, and strategies to improve the mineral content of pasture, hay or silage.

The key is to identify the deficiency before it becomes a visible production problem because when it comes to trace minerals, what you can't see can still be costing you. Investing in understanding your herd's mineral status can pay dividends through improved growth, development, and reproductive performance.



Hay & Silage Season Well Underway

It's that time of year again — the mower is out, the baler is busy and everyone is watching the weather forecast! Hay and Silage season is well underway, with plenty of paddocks being cut, wilted, baled and wrapped. As always, getting the timing, moisture and nutrition right can make all the difference to the quality of the feed coming off the paddock.

When is the best time to test for nutritional/feed-quality analysis?

- **At ensiling:** Take a representative sample of the fresh crop before it goes into the pit/bunker/bale. This gives you a useful baseline for DM, sugars, protein, NDF, ADF, minerals and fermentation potential.
- **After fermentation:** The more useful test for livestock feeding is generally once the silage has fermented and stabilised, (Approx 6 weeks) ideally after opening the stack/bunker or once bales are ready to be fed.
- **For a feed program:** Sample the silage from the actual feed face or bales being fed, rather than relying solely on the pre-ensiling sample. Fermentation changes the feed characteristics.

A **hay or silage coring device** is used to collect a **representative sample from inside a bale** for laboratory analysis. The main reason is that the outside of a bale can be quite different from the material in the centre. Taking a core gives you a cross-section through the bale, making the sample much more representative of what livestock will actually consume. You will need a high quality drill and additional batteries to take these types of samples in the field remotely.

When the Hay and Silage crops come off it is important to **Measure the removal → assess the soil → assess the next crop → replace what is required.**

Nutrition is again applied after hay and silage crops are harvested, particularly where the paddock is expected to produce another cut or continue growing pasture. The key point is that hay and silage remove a lot of nutrients from the paddock and while some nutrients are eventually returned when hay and silage are fed back out, this alone is generally not enough to replace what has been removed.