

What QLF Does and Tank Policy:



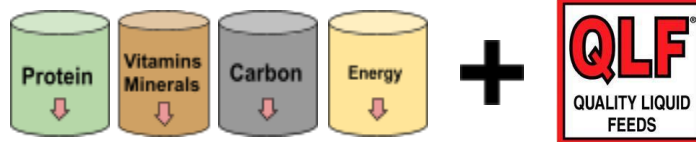
Light and Sweet: QLF fills in the nutritional gaps in our forages and hay. Does it pay to use it? Yes it does. How do I feed it? QLF is a liquid feed supplement that is generally fed through a lick tank. How do I get a tank to feed it? Call us.

Our tank policy is that you may use our QLF tanks as long as you are using our QLF. If you stop for whatever reason, we will pick the tanks up at our convenience.*

Want a more detailed explanation? Keep reading for the long version. Summary at the end.



Why do we feed supplements? Cattle have four buckets that they need filled to live and reproduce: Protein, Vitamins and Minerals, Carbon, and Energy. We often will use fertilizer to increase forage quantity and quality in order to fill the buckets a little more, but we still generally need to supplement with something else in addition, commonly loose minerals and feed.



What is causing the nutrients to be low in the first place? There are many drivers of deficiency, but the most common ones are monocultures, dormancy, winter weather extremes, drought, and low soil fertility. Some are beyond our control, and some we can have some impact on. Let's take a look at these causes. Monocultures are a single type or variety of plant that generally does really well in one or two buckets, but lacks in others. In grasses, for example, we have a lot of carbon and energy, but often a deficiency of protein, vitamins, and minerals. This is why we supplement with loose minerals and feed. There are seasons when this is either unnecessary or of low necessity, such as in spring when fescue is growing like crazy and has more nutritional value. During those times, cow manure becomes loose as it has more protein to digest the fiber, and mineral intake can decrease. The flip side is in mid summer or winter when the grass isn't growing, and the cows are essentially just eating standing or baled straw. You can get some understanding for how the cow is digesting its forage by seeing how high the manure is stacking up. A cow with adequate protein has a more flat manure patty about 1.5-2 inches tall. When the forage is severely deficient, the manure stacks up like a mountain. Over time with forage like this, the cow's looks changes as well, with her belly big and round, but her ribs showing up above. This is a sign that she isn't processing the forages and is slowly starving. If the cow is well fed, you won't be counting ribs while her belly is fat. So, what happens with clover? Clover has plenty of protein, but a deficiency of carbon. As the carbon to protein pendulum swings the other way from grasses, we have squirty cows with very flat manure patties. This is a sign that the carbon bucket is too low compared to the protein bucket. Some describe it as the grass "running through" the cow, and doesn't do well at putting on weight. Again it is an imbalance of nutrition.

All the forages have their place. Grasses tend to be high in carbon. Legumes, like clover, alfalfa, and lespedeza, are higher in protein, vitamins, and minerals. Forbs, like chicory, plantains, and many weeds, tend to have high vitamins, minerals, and often high protein as well. A big difference between the legumes and forbs is that the legumes can supply their own nitrogen for proteins by partnering up with soil biology, whereas the forbs and grasses need an outside source like fertilizer, manure, or a nearby legume to supply it with nitrogen. Some of the pasture forbs, that we tend to call weeds, can be 25% protein or even higher. If we can get the cows to eat these weeds, often with intensive rotational grazing, we can greatly reduce the need for supplements. Another option is to inter-seed your pastures with forbs that are more beneficial, like chicory, native sunflowers, and rapeseed. Forbs often have good tap roots that can help break up hard soils, helping fine rooted plants, like fescue, grow better in tight soils. Highly biologically active soil can supply a large portion of a pasture's nitrogen needs without legumes or fertilizer. Adding legumes gives an even larger boost. Diversity of plants combined with rotational grazing are key to soil health.

When we have a diverse pasture with all three types in it, grasses, legumes, and forbs, we can have a more balanced level in all of the buckets. However, constant open grazing of pastures will allow the cows to be like kids, picking and choosing to eat their favorite plants, resulting in overgrazing of small parts of the pasture. The result of this is that when hard times come, those plants die, creating bare spots for weeds to come up. Managing grazing with a rotation helps keep this to a minimum by preventing the cows from even getting to that favorite spot for a time to let the plant recover, flourish, and not die in times of drought.

What about the other drivers of deficiency? We can address dormant deficiency by incorporating a diversity of forages with different growing seasons. If you don't like feeding hay in cool weather, consider adding some perennial ryegrass to your pastures. Ryegrass can grow at 38 degrees, whereas wheat for instance needs 50 degrees to actively grow. If you have low times in mid summer, incorporate some native grasses, crabgrass, lespedeza, alfalfa, or bermuda to help fill that gap. Improving the diversity of plants and rotational grazing will improve the soil health of your pasture, which also helps with the deficiency drivers of winter weather extremes, drought, and low soil fertility.

So why feed QLF? Because many of our pastures do not have a nice well managed mix of forages with perfect weather to fill all these buckets. What happens when some of these buckets are deficient? Over time we see a cascade of signals. We start with manure piling into tall mountains, move to weight loss, and as that adds up, we see more ribs standing out. If we look over a long enough time, we can see reduced pregnancy rates, increased abortions, reduced weaning weights, and much lower profits. This can be referred to as “starving a profit into them”. This is not a profitable long term plan. Research shows that depriving a pregnant cow by as little as 10% of her needs in a single trimester, can result in double digit reductions in calving rates for multiple generations compared to control herds. If you plan on keeping your own heifers, feed their mommas! QLF helps you do this by supplementing protein, vitamins, minerals, and energy, while being out in the field all the time like a creep feed. This allows the cow to come eat at any time, without the supplement being hogged by the boss cow, like can happen in a feed bunk. Another big difference is that most supplements are focused primarily on just one or two of the buckets, whereas QLF is focused on supplementing basic nutrition deficiencies that are preventing the forage from being digested well. By filling in these gaps, the cow can digest more forage, helping fill in the remaining nutrient and energy needs.

How does QLF fill those buckets? Protein - we seasonally adjust protein levels based on our estimation of the forage quality in our area. Energy - QLF uses a molasses base that results in 22% sugar content, providing a quick energy source. Vitamins and Minerals - QLF contains a custom vitamin and mineral pack, often resulting in cattle reducing loose mineral intakes by 50% or more. In August 2017 we added ZinPro's Availa 4 trace mineral pack. Research has proven that including the Availa 4 mineral pack improves animal health resulting in an increased calving rate, increased weaning weights, decreased sickness, and a tighter calving window. One large customer reported that after adding Availa 4 to our QLF, his calving window was cut in half. Availa 4 is also available in our feedmill and can be added into your custom grain feeds or mineral mixes. In February 2025, we increased the magnesium content in our custom QLF to equal 400% of the magnesium in most free choice minerals, and 40% of high mag minerals. In November 2023, we added Ralco's Microbial Catalyst to QLF to further boost fiber digestion. Microbial Catalyst acts as a cofactor to unlock enzymes, stimulating microbes that break down forages, and helping the cow to digest more fiber that would have simply passed undigested through the cow into the manure. Some Microbial Catalyst studies testing undigested fiber in manure, showed over 30% decrease in undigested fiber. Undigested fiber is wasted forage. All this tied together allows the animal to take low quality standing forage or hay, and still get the nutrition it needs by supplementing the buckets and increasing digestibility of the forage.

Why do the cows stop eating in the spring?

When forages are good, the nutrition buckets tend to be relatively full, requiring less supplementation. In reality, the cows rarely truly stop eating for more than a short period of time. There are usually a few cows who still need some help and nibble a little. If we are hand feeding, we often wait to start supplementing again until we can see that they lost weight. On a full sized cow, how much weight do they need to lose in order for us to see it? 50 lb.? How much have you hurt their production before you can see it while driving by checking the pasture? The creep feeding nature of QLF allows the cows to eat when they need it, rather than when you see they have lost weight.

How does this pencil out over the feed season?

QLF: Average 2lb/day/6 month autofill** @\$460/ton, + 3lb grain, once a week to keep the cows friendly	Traditional Feeds: grain mix 4 lb./day/6 month @\$220/ton - 14% bulk textured feed, no mineral in feed.
Total Mineral & Feed cost: \$105-115 for 182 days	Total Mineral & Feed cost: \$120-130 for 182 days
Mineral intake - ½ normal because of QLF minerals	Mineral intake - ¼ lb./hd/day
Labor cost - QLF none + grain labor and equipment	Labor cost- Farmer's time and equipment is free right??
Calving rate - double digit increase w/ Availa 4	Calving rate - normal
Weaning weight - Availa 4 increased avg 28 lb.	Weaning weights - normal
Calving window - Tighter window = less labor	Calving window - same old wide window - free labor right??
Sickness - Reduced - less medicine and labor	Sickness - normal
Productive Lifetime - increased with better nutrition	Productive Lifespan - normally considered 7-8 years

Which option is the cheaper option? That depends on what you include in the cost. Labor, equipment, loss of income due to slow breedback, lower calving rates, sickness, and lighter calves at the sale barn result in less money in the bank.

Wish to discuss this more? Give us a call! 620-226-3322

* We are not planning to provide tanks for our competition or as a pasture ornament.

** QLF total average intakes tend to be similar whether fed year round or fed seasonally. This is because it takes nearly double the inputs to regain body condition, than was saved during the loss of body condition. Thus, by not feeding QLF in the spring/summer/early fall when intakes are low, the cow eats much more in the winter to catch back up on the body condition it lost. Lower body condition results in lower productivity and less profit without saving money on QLF costs. Only feeding over the winter months results in fewer days of feeding, but much higher intakes.