
Make your own salt block for livestock

Bone meal has another use. You can overcome mineral deficiencies in cattle by making your own cattle lick or mineral block, using bonemeal as the source of phosphorous. Bonemeal can be fed alone to cattle, but it is better to enrich it by adding other trace elements that may be lacking in your particular area. Plants grown on soil deficient in phosphorous will themselves be deficient in phosphorous. The livestock that eat the plants may in turn have low blood phosphorus levels, causing many health problems.

Salt licks can provide the minerals that are often lacking for livestock. You can make your own out of local ingredients. Some farmers and community groups started producing salt licks for sale in their village as an income-generating activity. Farmers in Kenya could not afford commercial salt licks, but when some farmers' groups started producing local salt licks, villagers began buying them. (From Baobab 28, March 1999, summarized in EDN 65).

The simplest recipe for making a salt lick comes from Ibrahima Diallo of Veterinarians without Borders. The ingredients required are bones, salt and clay. Pound and sift clay from a termite mound. Then mix two parts rock salt, four parts bonemeal and one part of termite clay and add enough water to create a paste. The paste can then be molded by putting it in wooden boxes, in wide metal bowls or calabashes with holes in them (for aeration), or in big tin cans lined with plastic bags (remove the salt lick when dry). Once dried, put the salt licks out for your livestock. More information is found in EDN 65 and on a website (www.dsimb.inserm.fr/~debrevern/OTHERPB/611blocks... (http://www.dsimb.inserm.fr/~debrevern/OTHER_PB/611_blocks.html)) detailing steps to make a protein block.