

UCD VET VIEWS
CALIFORNIA CATTLEMAN, NOVEMBER 1994

SUPPLEMENTAL SELENIUM

In the past two weeks, significant developments have occurred at the national level with respect to our ability to supply supplemental selenium to the livestock and poultry in the U.S.A. Even those of us who have been following this subject closely over the years, find the most recent news exciting and I felt it was worthy of a short article to catch everyone up to speed. During the last week in September, President Clinton signed the Appropriations Bill (that funds the FDA and other agencies). Language in this bill suspended the stay contained in the Federal Register notice published by the FDA on September 13, 1993. In non-legal terms, this means that the roll-back to lower levels of selenium supplementation was suspended and the FDA could not decrease allowable selenium supplementation levels to those in force before 1987.

During the week of October 3, 1994, the bill reorganizing the USDA was passed by the U.S. House and Senate. Language contained in the USDA reorganization bill would preclude the FDA from decreasing the allowable levels of selenium that can be fed to cattle (and other species) unless certain factors are considered. That language directs that the FDA shall not enforce the final rules to alter the levels of selenium (lower the levels) unless FDA makes the determinations listed below:

1. Selenium additives are not essential. (The FDA has previously concluded that selenium is essential for animals.)
2. Selenium at such levels (current levels of 0.3 ppm) are not safe for animals consuming it. (FDA has previously concluded selenium fed at such levels is safe.)
3. Selenium at such levels are not safe for individuals (people) consuming edible portions of animals that receive the additives. (The FDA has previously concluded that meat, milk, and eggs from food-producing animals consuming such levels are safe.)
4. Selenium at such levels does not achieve its intended effect of promoting normal growth and reproduction. (The FDA has concluded that selenium at such levels does achieve these goals.)
5. Manufacture and use of selenium cannot be reasonably controlled by the adherence to current good manufacturing practices. (FDA has concluded that use of selenium can be reasonably controlled by current GMP.)

The need to consider these factors will effectively cause the FDA to maintain the allowable selenium levels at the higher (0.3 ppm) rates. The USDA bill is expected to be signed by the President shortly; however, nothing is guaranteed in this respect. When (if) signed, this USDA reorganization bill will represent a permanent solution to the problem of being able to supplement adequate selenium to our cattle.

The rumor is that "environmentalists" regard this legislation as a "slap in the face" and have vowed to continue activity in this area. The bottom line is that there will be a continued need for concern, and for scientific and political activity in this regard. The NCA, National Milk Producers Federation, National Pork Producers, AVMA, and all the other groups that make up the Consortium for Animal Agriculture and all the other groups and individuals worked very hard on the political solution to this pending problem.

Those of us in Veterinary Medicine Extension (UC Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine) were very active in this effort, both from a standpoint of supplying scientific facts and in discussions regarding the possible political resolutions. It is also extremely important that the livestock industry not be put in the position of responding to environmental concerns without the benefit of scientific data. To be more proactive in this regard, we are in the process of organizing a national meeting on "selenium in animals and the environment" to get all the facts on the table and to plan for future efforts. The CCA has been extremely supportive in this regard and as plans for this national meeting progress, we will notify the CCA membership.

John Maas, DVM, MS
Diplomate, ACVN & ACVIM
Extension Veterinarian
School of Veterinary Medicine
University of California-Davis

[Home](#) | [Beef Cattle Programs](#) | [FAQ/Beef](#) | [INFO/Beef](#) | [Top](#)

Your support of the School of Veterinary Medicine makes a difference



[Contact us](#) | [Animal Health Inquiries](#) | [Check us out on Facebook, Twitter, & YouTube](#) | [Online Donation Form](#) | [Site Map](#)
UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine • One Shields Avenue • Davis, CA 95616
Copyright © The Regents of the University of California, Davis campus. All Rights Reserved.