

Is the farmer getting what he pays for?

It has come to light that certain lick batches of various producers do not meet the phosphate content requirements stipulated by law.

Recent tests conducted by e-Forum on Namibian licks indicate that the phosphate content of certain tested products is below the prescribed levels. As a product distributor, Agra strives at all times to deliver a variety of quality products at competitive prices to its members and the agricultural sector and finds such deviations completely unacceptable.

As a respected company, Agra is committed to conducting business to the benefit of its members within the parameters established by the Ministry of Agriculture and the legal framework of Namibia. Agra, therefore only distributes animal feed that is registered according to legislated Namibian requirements. It is the onus of the producer to ensure that the product meets the stipulated legal requirements. Furthermore, it is the Ministry's duty to provide an assurance of product quality by continuous product monitoring. This should be applicable to all products and not only feed and licks.

The product quality disparity was immediately taken up with the producers of products that tested as sub-standard. The following measures have been implemented with immediate effect:

- Analyses of all concerned P12 currently in stock at Agra branches are available. In order to ascertain the quality of the product, the client is entitled to peruse the product's analysis certificate upon purchase.
- All new products procured by Agra will be accompanied by the producer's analysis to verify product quality. In addition, the producer has implemented control measures to the sum of approximately N\$ 1 million to ensure continued quality – this includes the purchase of state-of-the-art analysis equipment measuring P-content at the production point, thus ensuring that the product meets the quality standard prior to shipping.
- The producer has assented to independent monthly analysis by the Ministry to ensure that the product meets the required specifications. The cost of such analysis will be borne by the producer.
- Agra will require similar analyses from producers wishing to market their products through the co-operative.

These measures meet Agra's demands for ensuring that the required quality standards are met. The onus now lies with producers of phosphate products in ensuring that products continue to meet the established standards.

Agra places great value on delivering quality products to its members and will strive to do all within its power to ensure that the member receives value for money. Analyses drawn by Agra on its total range of P12 phosphates indicate that there are other producers whose products do not meet the required phosphate content. The matter is under discussion with the relevant producers and they will be expected to supply the necessary analyses to Agra to ensure that quality standards are met.

Producers of products that do not meet Namibia's legislated standard criteria will not be able to distribute their products through Agra.

N-Wes Fosfaat, one of Agra's producers, responded that although such incidences may occur, they are not intentional on the part of the producer. According to N-Wes, the incorrect composition of a lick may occur as a result of an oversight, sabotage or other unexplained reasons. Furthermore, the consignments concerned constituted less than 0.1% of its total business conducted in Namibia.

The question arises as to what the effects on livestock that imbibe sub-standard phosphate-rich products may be. Dr. Izak Groenewald, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, explains that the effects of phosphate lick supplements are evident in the long term provision of the correct phosphate levels to animals. Hence, due to the short time period of the occurrence, there should be no negative effects on animal performance. Dr. Groenewald cautions that within the general practice of phosphate lick supplements, the tendency to supplement more salt than required is to be regarded in a far more serious light.

N-Wes states:

“N-Wes Fosfaat regrets insinuations made by various individuals and institutions in Namibia. Claims are made that border on defamation. N-Wes Fosfaat distances itself from such business practices. The tragedy is that you, the livestock farmer, are the afflicted party due to the uncertainty cast over the general practice of phosphate lick supplements in Namibia.

The unprecedented growth of N-Wes Fosfaat over the last three years coupled with the positive general feedback from both Namibian and South African livestock farmers indicates that our product meets your expectations. Our growth in market share is, unavoidably, at the expense of other producers and it is natural that counter reaction will occur. We accept this opportunity and challenge with enthusiasm and responsibility.

N-Wes Fosfaat thanks it’s satisfied and loyal supporters and extends its best wishes for successful farming operations. We will continue to serve your needs in a transparent, ethical and honest manner. N-Wes Fosfaat continues to be your best choice in lick supplements.”

As we enter autumn, we wish to recommend your switch to winter licks and encourage you to consider our tested Winter Lick 40 or Production Lick 25. Please do not hesitate to contact any Agra branch or our representatives, Leon Badenhorst at 082 825 3466 or Abri Niemann at 082 825 3476, in case of further queries.