

Micronutrients - The Right Combination is Decisive for Success

The idea of writing about micronutrients in our management series is not something that came on a whim. The current discussion about climate change and increasing the efficiency of feed conversion in order to decrease the emission of greenhouse gases by the livestock sector, and the political and societal pressure to forego the use of antibiotics in animal feeds, have brought increased attention to micronutrients. But regardless whether talking about an increase in production or improved immunity, micronutrients are not simply micronutrients. The correct selection and combination are decisive.

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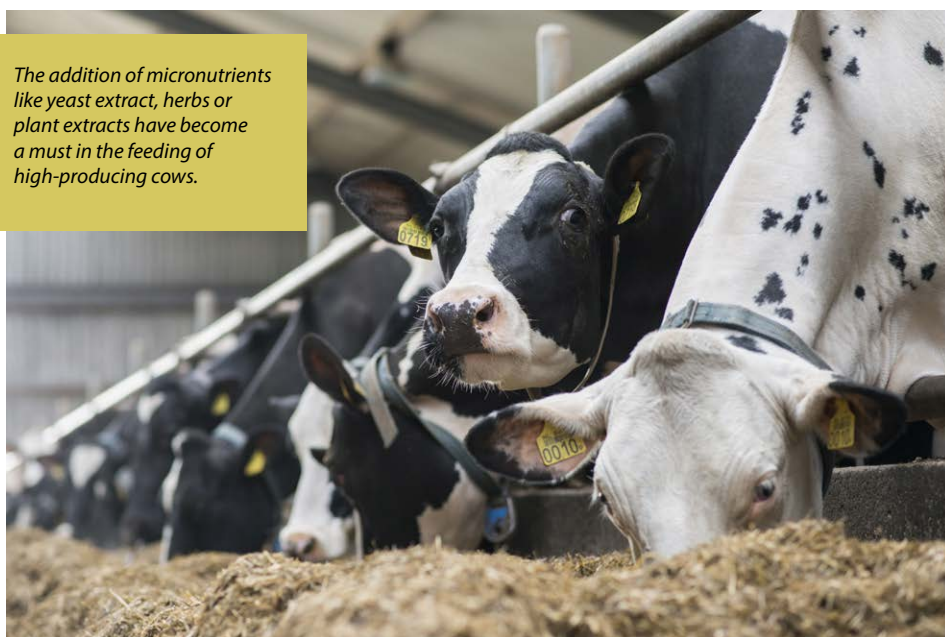
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To learn more about the effective use of micronutrients we met with Jürg Hofmann. His business, Hofmann Nutrition AG in Switzerland, has been working on this area of animal nutrition for more than 40 years under the label "Hokovit." There are hundreds or thousands of different micronutrients that could be used in feeding. Primarily yeast-extracts, herbs and plant extracts, as well as specific fatty acids or colostrum are used with the goal of boosting the immune system or to induce positive effects on production and growth. The difficulty is not only to select the right micronutrients but to use them in the right combination and at the right concentration. And to achieve maximum success and the most return on investment, then the use of the micronutrient mix needs to be customized for the species, age and stage of life of the animals as well as the profit goals. High-producing cows need different micronutrients than cows in an extensively managed system.

The addition of micronutrients like yeast extract, herbs or plant extracts have become a must in the feeding of high-producing cows.



‘Animal nutrition can be studied but there are no reliable scientific studies about the ideal combination of micronutrients’

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Which micronutrients are used in the Hokovit products is not something Jürg Hofmann divulges to us. 'That,' he says, 'is a trade secret. But for more than 40 years we have been working to develop the right micronutrients in the ideal combinations for the various demands in animal feeding. As part of this we cooperate with several of the best herds here in Switzerland and also in Germany and other European countries. Scientific research hasn't focused a lot on this topic so far and so there is not an official and reliable evaluation. We have to rely on the results of our own feeding trials and the feedback from on-farm experience. But they really do show that we can accomplish a lot with our products. If we really want to improve the feed conversion and efficiency of a feeding program or improve the immune system through feeding to minimize the use of antibiotics, then it is not enough to simply advertise for the addition of certain micronutrients. To be properly successful we need to

tailor the selection, amount, and combination to the respective demands of an animal. Today we are even going so far, for large customers who are most often innovators, as to prepare custom micronutrient mixes specific to their needs and requirements.'

HIGH-PRODUCING COWS

The experience that Hofmann Nutrition has gathered over the decades in the area of micronutrients can today be found in the production "Dairy Pro" and "Dairy Protect" for dairy cows. Dairy Pro has been on the market longer and covers immunity and production. The Dairy Protect product is relatively new and is supposed to primarily improve the feed conversion of high-producing cows. The goal is to

get more milk out of the same feed, not only to improve the economics of feeding cows but to also conserve resources and make feeding more environmentally friendly. Hofmann expects that with Dairy Protect an improvement in feed efficiency will be achieved as was previously seen with the use of feed-grade antibiotics (5-10%)...however, without the harmful side effects for animal, human, and environment. Hofmann Nutrition is still interested in having more practical results about the use of Dairy Protect and is offering this product for customers interested in the testing at a discounted rate. ●