

Overcoming Issues Encountered by Feeding Higher Amounts of Distillers Grains in Beef Cattle Rations

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Like any other feedstuff, when feeding high levels of distillers grains, the nutrient profile needs to be considered. The nutrients of potential concern in beef cattle diets are sulfur, phosphorus and fat. The 1996 Beef NRC gives a mean sulfur concentration of 0.44% for distillers grains plus solubles. However, practical experience suggests that concentrations of 0.80% or higher are common. Dietary sulfur concentrations above 0.4% increases the risk of polioencephalomalacia. High levels of phosphorus in the diet can become a nutrient management problem. When soil phosphorus concentrations become high enough that state regulatory agencies will only allow phosphorus applications equal to phosphorus removal, then more acres are required for manure disposal. Distillers grains plus solubles usually contains 10-12% fat. High levels of unsaturated fat in the rumen will inhibit fiber digestion. This is one of the reasons that the energy value of distillers grains may decrease when the dietary fat concentration is above 5%. With all of these issues, serious problems can be avoided with proper management.