

“Effects of strategically placed low-moisture block supplement and salt on individual cattle grazing patterns.” Derek Bailey 1, Harv VanWagoner 2, Robin Weinmeister 2 and Delyn Jensen 2. 1Department of Animal and Range Sciences, Las Cruces, NM; 2Northern Agricultural Research Center, Havre, MT. Abstr., Ann. Mtg. Soc. Range Manage. Vancouver, BC, Feb., 2006.

ABSTRACT: A study was conducted to compare the effects of strategically placed salt and low-moisture blocks (LMB) on movement patterns of individual cows grazing foothill rangeland in northern Montana during the fall. Cows ($n = 32$) were tracked with global positioning system (GPS) collars for two 10-day periods. Salt and LMB were available for one period and only salt was available for the other period. During these two periods, all supplements were placed in the same location on ridges that historically received little use. Cows used higher elevations and remained farther from water when LMB was available as compared to salt alone ($P < 0.001$). Cows traveled 4.35 ± 0.09 km/day when supplemented with LMB and 3.94 ± 0.09 km/day with salt ($P < 0.001$). Cows grazed more within 600 m of the supplement sites ($P = 0.05$) when LMB was available than with only salt. The observed differences in grazing patterns between treatments were most apparent in the higher terrain near supplement sites (10 to 100 m). Cows were less active when only salt was available ($P < 0.001$), but much of the difference in activity between treatments appeared to be consumption of LMB at night. Over a 24-hour period, only 26 of the 73 minutes that cows spent within 10 m of LMB occurred during daylight. Results from this study support previous research suggesting that LMB is an effective attractant that can be used to lure cattle to graze areas that previously received little use.