

Goatvetoz Spring Newsletter

Goat Veterinary Consultancies - goatvetoz

Spring 2023

Feeding molasses to goats

Molasses is a by-product of the sugar industry and in Queensland and northern NSW is readily available from cane mills. It is also available in any region of the world with a sugar industry. It is a cheap source of feed but should you use it for goats?

Many hobby goat owners offer warm water, flavoured with molasses after kidding or to sick goats. This is a useful energy boost.

Molasses is high energy but is also:

- Low in protein
- Low in phosphorus (P)
- Low in sodium
- High in water (25%)
- High in potassium(K)
- High in sulphur
- Has no Vitamin A

It is widely used as a supplement in beef cattle areas but it is either used in lick blocks or special mixes and self-serve lick apparatus. It is used in combination with some of the following:

- Urea &/or protein meal
- Phosphorus or Di-Calcium Phosphorus (DCP)
- Salt

Because molasses is high in K and very low in P it should not be fed to male goats as it can interfere with the Calcium P ratio and possibly lead to urinary calculi formation.

However we know from research that molasses is not toxic to goats even at 50% of the diet, although the trial did not go on for long enough to make any conclusions about urinary calculi (Amin & Adams, 1993). The lack of vitamin A in molasses is less of concern as goats can store 6 months supply of Vitamin A in their liver. If goats have access to green feed then their Vitamin A needs will be met.

Another research trial found that Nubian weaned kids grew well on a diet with 30% molasses for a period 3 weeks (Osman et al, 2020). The diet was

Vaccine Storage

Vaccines for goats need to be kept in a cold fridge but not frozen. They need to be stored according to the label. Where do you buy your vaccines? Hopefully from a veterinarian and you bring along an esky with cold freezer bricks to transport the vaccines home. Some produce merchants sell vaccines but ask if they have temperature data loggers or temperature alarms installed. Research in the United Kingdom found that some resellers and farmers stored vaccines in fridges that did not meet the label requirements - either allowing them to get too hot or to freeze and then thaw. Also if buying on-line make sure to order on a Monday and get the parcel sent the quickest way and that the freezer bricks sent with the vaccines are still partly frozen on arrival. If you have suffered an electrical power loss from storms and the fridge has not had power for more than a few hours, then throw out the vaccines. Your goats' health rely on these vaccines.

balanced with the additional molasses taking the place of sorghum and bran, but needing more peanut meal to add more protein. Salt and limestone was added to each diet of the 4 used i.e. from 0 to 45% molasses.

There are some other potential complications for molasses feeding. This is a known predisposing factor for polioencephalomalacia. So it is a good idea to have some injectable thiamine (Vitamin B1) on hand. Molasses is also very corrosive to feeders and storage tanks. The other potential downside is the mess that goats can get into especially if white coated. Goats will wipe their molasses lips all over other goats to clean their mouths so the herd ends up with sticky black marks all over their coats.

The bottom line is that if you can access molasses at a cheap price, get some professional advice and use it sensibly in a balanced ration.

COWP boluses

The safest way to give copper to your goats is via a Copper Oxide Wire Particle (COWP) bolus.

These are gelatin capsules with tiny slivers of copper oxide in them the size of iron filings. They float around in the goat's rumen & slowly release copper.

There are a range of products registered for goats in Australia and a search of the government database showed 5 brands:

- WSD Keyright
- Copgane
- Tracerite
- Minerite
- Coppers Permatrace

They all given no more than annually and have warnings along these lines "Excessive copper is toxic. This product is contraindicated for use unless copper deficiency is confirmed. "

However COWP boluses have another purpose as they can kill Barbers pole worms (*Haemonchus contortus*). It is not sure exactly how they do this but it is suggested they change the acid levels in the 4th stomach where these worms live. They don't kills scour worms which live lower down in

the intestines. An additional benefit is that they can improve the efficacy of white drenches if given at the same time making they work closer to 95% in killing worms.

In Australia, even if a veterinary medicine is registered for goats, if you are going to use it in a different way than that stated on the label then you need to get a veterinary prescription. So if using COWP boluses to kill worms and more than annually then you need a script. Vets will restrict use of COWP boluses to a maximum of 4 times a year to prevent copper toxicity which can cause sudden death. Miniature breed get half doses. Kids must be weaned before they can get half a bolus.

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