

Mineral Supplements

Virtually all diets for every class of dairy livestock require mineral supplementation. Minerals mixes are available in several forms:

Complete mineral mixes contain blends of macro- and trace minerals, often with vitamins A, D and E added. Every feed dealer will sell a wide variety of these products, formulated for specific classes of livestock and particular geographic requirements. Commonly sold in 25 kg bags, complete mineral mixes are designed to be offered to animals 'free-choice' (ad libitum) or to be blended with other grains and concentrates on-farm.

Macro premixes are specifically designed for addition to other concentrates in complete concentrate mixes used to supplement home-grown forages. Containing both macro- and trace minerals as well as vitamins, these premixes are most commonly blended with other ingredients in a feed mill.

Micro premixes are used in the same way as macro premixes but they contain only trace (micro-) minerals and vitamins and are, therefore, used in smaller quantities. When micro premixes are used, macro-minerals are usually blended into the complete concentrate mix individually.

Mineral supplements are either offered free-choice (ad libitum) or blended with other ingredients as described above. Unless there is no other practical choice, ad libitum feeding is not recommended. Although the rate of disappearance of mineral from an ad libitum feeder may seem appropriate for a group of animals, individual intakes will vary widely and product loss from weather and spillage will almost always occur.