

Crude Protein by the Pound

Michael Fisher

Colorado State University Extension-Golden Plains Area

Once pasture/range plant residues get below 6 to 8 percent crude protein (CP), they do not provide enough CP to support the beef cow and her growing fetus. Therefore, many producers turn to purchasing supplements to provide CP. This can be expensive. Many producers will compare the retail prices offered, perhaps even looking at it on a bulk rate per ton. I would suggest that you should look at it on a price per pound but not of the supplement product. Instead price it based on the price per pound of CP that the product contains.

Use the percent CP of your supplement and multiply it by the total amount of the supplement product that you purchased. This will tell you how many pounds of CP you have purchased. So, if you bought a ton of range cubes with a CP of at least 20%, you have purchased 400 pounds of CP. Now, let's assume that you paid \$267 per ton for the cubes. In essence, you have spent \$267 for 400 pounds of CP. You can further surmise that you are paying 67 cents per pound of CP.

Now, let's assume that the feed store also offered a 30% cube for \$325 per ton but you felt that it was too expensive. Using the same math strategies we can determine that this product offers 600 pounds of CP at a value of 54 cents per pound. The 30% cube is the better deal, assuming that CP is the limiting factor in your cow herd's winter grazing program.

Additionally, you can use this technique to better compare the value of different types of supplement. As an example, let's say that we are able to purchase soybean meal (SBM) that is 48% CP, for \$431 per ton. This means that for each ton of SBM we have purchased 960 pounds of CP at a value of 45 cents per pound. Suddenly, SBM is a better buy.

Calculating the cost of your supplement based on CP per pound and then matching it with the CP requirements of your cow herd can be a significant savings to your winter feeding program.