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Role of Mineral Mixtures and Mineral Bricks in Improving Reproductive Efficiency, Health, Immunity and Productivity of Dairy Cattle: Recent Advances and Future Perspectives

Borkar, S.D.[1], Jadhav, S.G.[2], Chigure, G.M.[3] and Chepte, S.D.[4]
1Associate Professor and Head, Dept. of Veterinary Biochemistry, Nagpur Veterinary College, Nagpur
2Incharge Professor and Head, Dept. of Veterinary Parasitology, Nagpur Veterinary College, MAFSU, Nagpur
3Associate Professor, Dept. of Dept. of Veterinary Parasitology, College of Veterinary Science & A.H., Parbhani, MAFSU, Nagpur
4Associate Professor, Dept. of Dept. of Veterinary Surgery, College of Veterinary Science & A.H., Parbhani, MAFSU, Nagpur
***Corresponding Author:** sonaliborkar@mafsu.ac.in
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Mineral nutrition constitutes a fundamental component of dairy cattle management and plays a decisive role in maintaining animal health, reproductive efficiency, immunity, growth, and milk production. Despite their requirement in relatively small quantities, minerals participate in numerous physiological and biochemical processes that are essential for life. Modern livestock production systems are characterized by high-yielding dairy animals, intensive cultivation practices, depletion of soil nutrients, and increased production demands, all of which have contributed to widespread mineral deficiencies in livestock. Deficiencies of major minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium, and sulphur, as well as trace minerals including zinc, copper, cobalt, selenium, iodine, iron, and manganese, adversely affect productivity and reproductive performance. These deficiencies manifest as poor growth, infertility, delayed puberty, repeat breeding, retained placenta, metabolic disorders, decreased milk yield, and reduced disease resistance. Mineral mixtures and mineral bricks have emerged as effective nutritional interventions to address these deficiencies. Recent advances in mineral nutrition, including area-specific mineral mixtures, chelated minerals, nano-minerals, and precision feeding strategies, have further enhanced the efficiency of mineral supplementation programmes. The present review discusses the significance of mineral nutrition in dairy cattle, the physiological roles of essential minerals, deficiency disorders, benefits of mineral mixtures and mineral bricks, recent research findings, and future prospects for sustainable livestock production.

Introduction:

Livestock farming occupies a central position in the agricultural economy of India and many other

developing countries. Dairy animals contribute significantly to food security, nutritional security, rural employment, and economic development. The productivity of dairy cattle depends largely upon the adequacy and balance of nutrients supplied through feeding programmes. Traditionally, emphasis has been placed on supplying energy, protein, and roughage; however, the importance of mineral nutrition is often underestimated despite its profound influence on animal health and production.

Minerals are inorganic elements that are indispensable for numerous physiological functions. They are involved in skeletal development, blood formation, enzyme activation, hormone production, nerve transmission, muscle contraction, immune regulation, reproduction, and milk synthesis. Unlike carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, minerals cannot be synthesized within the body and must therefore be supplied through the diet. The absence or deficiency of even a single essential mineral may impair physiological functions and compromise animal performance.

The intensification of dairy farming has increased the demand for balanced mineral nutrition. High-producing dairy cows lose substantial quantities of minerals through milk secretion, while continuous cultivation and soil degradation have reduced mineral availability in fodders. Consequently, mineral deficiencies have become increasingly common and are recognized as one of the major constraints limiting dairy productivity and reproductive efficiency worldwide.

Mineral mixtures and mineral bricks are practical nutritional tools designed to provide essential minerals in balanced proportions. Their regular supplementation has been shown to improve fertility, growth, immunity, milk production, and overall profitability of dairy enterprises. Recent scientific developments have further refined mineral supplementation strategies, making them more targeted and efficient than ever before.

Importance of Mineral Nutrition in Dairy Cattle:

Minerals are required throughout the life of an animal and influence virtually every physiological process. They contribute to structural functions such as the formation of bones and teeth, regulatory functions such as enzyme activation and hormone synthesis, and protective functions including immune responses and antioxidant defense. The importance of mineral nutrition extends from fetal development to adulthood and encompasses growth, reproduction, lactation, and disease resistance.

Deficiencies of minerals often remain subclinical for extended periods, resulting in reduced productivity without obvious clinical symptoms. Such hidden deficiencies are responsible for significant economic losses because they impair feed utilization, reproductive efficiency, growth rate, and milk production. Consequently, mineral nutrition is now regarded as a cornerstone of sustainable dairy farming.

- **Classification of Minerals:**

  Minerals are generally classified into macro minerals and micro minerals based on the quantities required by animals. Macro minerals include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium,

potassium, chloride, and sulphur, which are needed in comparatively larger amounts. Trace minerals include zinc, copper, cobalt, selenium, iodine, manganese, iron, and others that are required in minute quantities but exert profound physiological effects.

Although the quantitative requirements differ, both groups are equally important. Deficiency of either macro or micro minerals can disrupt normal metabolic functions and compromise productivity.

- **Causes of Mineral Deficiencies in Livestock:**

Mineral deficiencies in livestock arise from a combination of environmental, nutritional, and management factors. Continuous cropping without adequate nutrient replenishment has depleted mineral reserves in agricultural soils. High-yielding crop varieties remove larger quantities of nutrients from the soil, while imbalanced fertilizer use frequently neglects micronutrient replenishment. Consequently, fodders grown on such soils often contain inadequate mineral concentrations.

In addition, high-producing dairy animals require substantially greater amounts of minerals because large quantities are secreted in milk. Seasonal variations in fodder availability, poor feeding practices, and lack of awareness among farmers further aggravate the problem. Climate change and environmental stress have also emerged as important factors affecting mineral availability and utilization in livestock production systems.

Role of Minerals in Growth and Development:

Growth and development depend upon the coordinated functioning of multiple metabolic pathways, many of which require minerals as cofactors or structural components. Adequate mineral nutrition supports skeletal development, muscle growth, tissue repair, and organ function.

Calcium and phosphorus form the structural framework of bones and teeth, while magnesium contributes to enzymatic reactions associated with growth. Zinc is essential for DNA synthesis and cell division, whereas iron facilitates oxygen transport necessary for tissue development. Deficiencies of these minerals during early life may permanently impair growth potential and productive performance.

- **Calcium and Skeletal Development:**

Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body and is primarily associated with skeletal development. Approximately ninety-nine percent of the body's calcium is present in bones and teeth. Apart from its structural role, calcium is involved in muscle contraction, nerve conduction, blood clotting, and enzyme activation. Growing calves require adequate calcium to achieve normal skeletal development and attain optimum body size.

- **Phosphorus and Energy Metabolism:**

Phosphorus is a vital component of ATP, nucleic acids, and phospholipids. It plays a central

role in energy transfer and cellular metabolism. Adequate phosphorus nutrition promotes growth, improves feed utilization, and supports reproductive functions. Deficiency may result in stunted growth, reduced appetite, and poor productive performance.

- **Magnesium and Neuromuscular Functions:**

  Magnesium participates in more than three hundred enzymatic reactions and is essential for neuromuscular function. It regulates energy metabolism, protein synthesis, and nerve transmission. Inadequate magnesium intake can lead to nervous disorders, muscle tremors, and grass tetany, particularly in lactating animals.

Mineral Nutrition and Reproductive Efficiency:

Reproduction is one of the most mineral-sensitive physiological processes in dairy cattle. Successful reproduction requires normal ovarian activity, hormone synthesis, fertilization, embryonic development, and maintenance of pregnancy. Minerals influence each of these stages and therefore determine overall reproductive efficiency.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that balanced mineral supplementation improves conception rates, reduces repeat breeding, shortens calving intervals, and enhances postpartum fertility. Conversely, mineral deficiencies are frequently associated with infertility and reproductive disorders.

- **Minerals and Puberty:**

  Puberty marks the onset of reproductive capability and is influenced by nutritional status. Adequate intake of calcium, phosphorus, zinc, copper, and manganese promotes normal growth and endocrine function, thereby facilitating timely attainment of puberty. Deficiencies often delay sexual maturity and reduce lifetime productivity.

- **Minerals and Estrous Cyclicity:**

  The estrous cycle is regulated by a complex interaction of hormones and metabolic signals. Minerals contribute to hormone synthesis and ovarian function. Deficiencies may lead to irregular estrous cycles, silent heat, or anestrus, reducing breeding efficiency.

- **Minerals and Conception Rate:**

  Conception depends upon successful ovulation, fertilization, and implantation. Trace minerals such as zinc, copper, selenium, and manganese are particularly important for these processes. Animals receiving balanced mineral supplementation generally exhibit higher conception rates than unsupplemented animals.

- **Minerals and Embryonic Development:**

  Embryonic growth requires continuous nutrient supply and proper hormonal regulation. Deficiencies of iodine, selenium, copper, and zinc can impair embryonic development and increase the risk of embryonic mortality.

- **Minerals and Pregnancy Maintenance:**

  Pregnancy places substantial nutritional demands on dairy animals. Adequate mineral nutrition supports placental development, fetal growth, and maternal health. Deficiencies may result in abortion, stillbirths, or weak offspring.

- **Minerals and Postpartum Fertility:**

  The postpartum period is characterized by significant physiological stress. Mineral supplementation promotes uterine involution, reduces retained placenta incidence, and accelerates return to estrous cycles, thereby improving reproductive efficiency.

Role of Trace Minerals in Reproduction:

Trace minerals, although required in minute quantities, exert profound effects on reproductive physiology. They function as cofactors for enzymes, participate in hormone synthesis, regulate antioxidant mechanisms, and support cellular growth and differentiation. Deficiencies of trace minerals often result in reproductive disorders before visible clinical symptoms appear.

- **Zinc and Fertility:**

  Zinc is recognized as one of the most important trace minerals influencing reproductive performance. It participates in DNA synthesis, protein metabolism, hormone production, and immune regulation. Adequate zinc nutrition is necessary for normal ovarian activity, follicular development, and embryo survival. Zinc deficiency has been associated with delayed puberty, poor conception rates, reduced fertility, and increased embryonic mortality. Furthermore, zinc contributes to maintaining the integrity of reproductive tissues and supports wound healing following parturition.

- **Copper and Reproductive Performance:**

  Copper plays a vital role in enzymatic reactions related to energy metabolism, connective tissue formation, and antioxidant defense. It contributes to reproductive performance by supporting hormone synthesis and embryo development. Deficiency of copper may result in delayed estrus, poor conception, increased embryonic loss, and reduced fertility. In severe cases, copper deficiency can lead to anemia and weakened immune responses, indirectly affecting reproductive efficiency.

- **Selenium and Reproductive Health:**

  Selenium functions primarily as an antioxidant through its incorporation into glutathione peroxidase and other selenoproteins. It protects reproductive tissues against oxidative damage and supports normal immune function. Selenium deficiency is commonly associated with retained placenta, metritis, reduced fertility, and weak calf syndrome. Studies have demonstrated that supplementation with selenium improves postpartum recovery and reproductive performance in

dairy cattle.

- **Iodine and Thyroid-Mediated Fertility:**

  Iodine is essential for the synthesis of thyroid hormones, which regulate metabolism, growth, and reproduction. Thyroid hormones influence ovarian function, fetal development, and lactation. Inadequate iodine intake may result in reduced fertility, abortions, stillbirths, prolonged gestation, and the birth of weak calves. Proper iodine nutrition is therefore critical throughout pregnancy.

- **Cobalt and Vitamin B12 Synthesis:**

  Cobalt is required by rumen microorganisms for the synthesis of vitamin B12. This vitamin plays an essential role in energy metabolism and growth. Cobalt deficiency may lead to reduced appetite, poor growth, weight loss, decreased milk production, and reproductive disorders. Adequate cobalt nutrition contributes to efficient rumen function and improved reproductive performance.

Mineral Nutrition and Immune Function:

The immune system serves as the primary defense mechanism against infectious diseases and environmental stressors. Minerals are indispensable for maintaining immune competence because they regulate immune cell development, antioxidant activity, and inflammatory responses.

Animals suffering from mineral deficiencies often exhibit increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, slower recovery rates, and greater production losses. Adequate mineral supplementation enhances disease resistance and promotes overall health.

- **Zinc and Immune Response:**

  Zinc influences the development and function of immune cells, including lymphocytes and macrophages. It enhances antibody production and improves resistance against bacterial and viral infections. Zinc supplementation has been shown to reduce disease incidence and improve recovery following infection.

- **Selenium as an Antioxidant:**

  Selenium protects cells against oxidative stress by neutralizing free radicals generated during normal metabolism and disease processes. Its antioxidant activity supports immune function and helps maintain tissue integrity. Adequate selenium nutrition is particularly important during periods of physiological stress such as calving and early lactation.

- **Copper and Disease Resistance:**

  Copper contributes to immune defense through its role in antioxidant enzymes and white blood cell function. Deficiency impairs immune responses and increases susceptibility to respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases.

- **Minerals and Mastitis Prevention:**

  Mastitis remains one of the most economically important diseases affecting dairy cattle. Research has demonstrated that balanced mineral supplementation, particularly zinc, selenium, and copper, improves udder health and reduces mastitis incidence. These minerals strengthen immune defenses and support tissue repair mechanisms.

Mineral Nutrition and Milk Production:

Milk production is one of the most nutritionally demanding physiological processes. Dairy animals lose substantial quantities of minerals through milk secretion every day. Consequently, mineral requirements increase significantly during lactation.

Insufficient mineral intake can lead to decreased milk yield, altered milk composition, and metabolic disorders. Balanced supplementation supports optimum lactation performance and maintains animal health.

- **Mineral Requirements During Lactation:**

  Lactating cows require greater quantities of calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium, and trace minerals than non-lactating animals. These minerals are continuously transferred into milk and must be replenished through feeding programmes.

- **Effects on Milk Yield and Composition:**

  Numerous studies have reported improvements in milk yield following mineral supplementation. Adequate mineral nutrition enhances feed utilization, rumen function, metabolic efficiency, and mammary gland activity. Improvements in milk fat percentage, protein content, and overall milk quality have also been documented.

- **Prevention of Metabolic Disorders:**

  Mineral supplementation reduces the incidence of metabolic disorders such as milk fever, ketosis, and hypomagnesemia. Prevention of these conditions contributes significantly to improved productivity and economic returns.

Mineral Deficiency Disorders in Dairy Cattle:

Mineral deficiencies are responsible for a wide range of clinical and subclinical disorders that reduce productivity and profitability.

- **Calcium Deficiency:**

  Calcium deficiency is commonly associated with milk fever, osteoporosis, weak bones, reduced fertility, delayed estrus, and poor growth. High-producing dairy cows are particularly vulnerable during early lactation due to sudden calcium demand for milk synthesis.

- **Phosphorus Deficiency:**

  Phosphorus deficiency causes reduced appetite, poor growth, infertility, decreased milk

yield, and pica. Animals may consume unusual materials such as soil, bones, paper, wood, or cloth in an attempt to satisfy nutritional needs.

- **Magnesium Deficiency:**

  Magnesium deficiency results in muscle tremors, nervousness, convulsions, and grass tetany. The condition is most common in lactating animals grazing lush pastures.

- **Iron Deficiency:**

  Iron deficiency primarily manifests as anemia, weakness, reduced growth, and poor productivity. Young calves are particularly susceptible because of their rapid growth rate.

- **Iodine Deficiency:**

  Iodine deficiency causes goiter, reproductive failure, abortions, prolonged gestation, and birth of weak calves. Thyroid dysfunction resulting from iodine deficiency negatively affects overall productivity.

- **Zinc Deficiency:**

  Zinc deficiency is characterized by poor wound healing, skin lesions, hoof disorders, reduced immunity, and impaired reproductive performance.

- **Cobalt Deficiency:**

  Cobalt deficiency results in poor appetite, weight loss, reduced milk production, anemia, and reproductive disorders. Long-term deficiency significantly compromises animal performance.

Mineral Mixtures: Composition, Functions and Benefits

Mineral mixtures are scientifically formulated supplements designed to provide essential macro and micro minerals in balanced proportions. These formulations are developed according to the nutritional requirements of dairy animals and are intended to correct deficiencies commonly encountered under field conditions.

Regular supplementation with mineral mixtures improves digestion, feed utilization, growth, reproduction, and milk production. By providing a balanced supply of minerals, these supplements ensure optimal functioning of metabolic pathways and physiological systems.

- **Benefits in Reproduction:**

  Mineral mixtures contribute significantly to reproductive efficiency by supporting ovarian function, hormone production, conception, embryo survival, and postpartum recovery. Their regular use reduces the incidence of repeat breeding, silent heat, and infertility.

- **Benefits in Growth:**

  Growing calves receiving adequate mineral supplementation exhibit improved skeletal development, better weight gain, and enhanced overall growth performance.

- **Benefits in Milk Production:**

Mineral supplementation supports lactation by replenishing minerals lost through milk secretion. Improved milk yield and better milk composition are frequently observed following regular supplementation.

- **Economic Benefits:**

  The economic benefits of mineral mixtures arise from increased productivity, improved fertility, reduced veterinary expenses, and enhanced longevity of dairy animals. The cost of supplementation is generally outweighed by the financial gains obtained through improved performance.

Mineral Bricks and Lick Blocks:

Mineral bricks, also known as mineral lick blocks, are solid compressed blocks containing minerals, salts, vitamins, and other nutritional ingredients. Animals obtain nutrients by licking the block according to their physiological requirements.

- **Composition and Manufacturing:**

  Mineral bricks typically contain calcium, phosphorus, sodium chloride, magnesium, trace minerals, vitamins, and binding agents. Advanced formulations may also include protein supplements and growth-promoting additives.

- **Mechanism of Intake:**

  Animals consume mineral bricks gradually through licking. This method ensures continuous nutrient availability and reduces the risk of excessive intake.

- **Advantages over Loose Mineral Mixtures:**

  Mineral bricks offer several practical advantages including ease of handling, reduced wastage, lower labour requirements, and suitability for grazing animals. They are particularly useful in extensive livestock production systems.

- **Field Applications in Dairy Farming:**

  Mineral bricks are increasingly used in dairy farms, grazing systems, and rural livestock production programmes because they provide a simple and effective means of mineral supplementation.

Urea Molasses Mineral Blocks (UMMB): An Emerging Technology

The increasing scarcity of quality fodder and the rising cost of concentrate feeds have encouraged researchers to develop innovative nutritional supplements capable of improving nutrient utilization and animal productivity. One such innovation is the Urea Molasses Mineral Block (UMMB), which combines urea, molasses, minerals, vitamins, and binding agents into a compact block that animals consume gradually through licking. UMMB technology has gained considerable popularity in tropical and subtropical countries because of its ability to enhance the utilization of low-quality roughages and crop

residues.

- **Composition:**

  A typical UMMB contains molasses as an energy source, urea as a non-protein nitrogen source, mineral mixture, common salt, cement or clay as a binder, and occasionally vitamins and trace minerals. The precise formulation varies according to the nutritional requirements of the target animal species and local feeding conditions. The objective is to provide a balanced supply of energy, nitrogen, and minerals to rumen microorganisms.

- **Nutritional Significance:**

  The rumen functions as a fermentation chamber where microorganisms digest fibrous feed materials. Efficient microbial activity requires a continuous supply of energy, nitrogen, and minerals. UMMB supplementation improves rumen microbial growth, enhances digestion of crop residues, and increases nutrient availability. Consequently, animals are able to derive greater nutritional value from low-quality feeds.

- **Impact on Milk Production and Feed Utilization:**

  Several field studies have demonstrated that UMMB supplementation increases feed intake, improves digestibility, enhances milk production, and supports better body condition. The technology has proven particularly valuable during periods of fodder scarcity when conventional feed resources are limited. By improving feed conversion efficiency, UMMB contributes to higher productivity and greater economic returns.

Recent Advances in Mineral Supplementation

The science of mineral nutrition has undergone substantial development during the past decade. Advances in analytical techniques, nutritional research, and precision livestock farming have resulted in more effective mineral supplementation strategies.

- **Area-Specific Mineral Mixtures:**

  One of the most significant developments has been the introduction of area-specific mineral mixtures. Researchers have recognized that mineral deficiencies vary according to soil type, climate, cropping patterns, and geographical location. Consequently, standardized mineral mixtures may not adequately address local deficiencies. Area-specific formulations are developed after detailed analysis of soil, fodder, and animal tissues, enabling more precise correction of deficiencies and improved productivity.

- **Chelated Minerals:**

  Chelated minerals represent another important advancement in livestock nutrition. In these formulations, minerals are chemically bound to amino acids or organic compounds, improving their absorption and bioavailability. Chelated zinc, copper, manganese, and selenium have shown

superior performance compared with conventional inorganic mineral sources. Their use has been associated with improved immunity, fertility, growth, and milk production.

- **Nano-Mineral Supplementation:**

  Nanotechnology has emerged as a promising field in animal nutrition. Nano-minerals possess extremely small particle sizes that enhance absorption and biological activity. Studies have indicated that nano-zinc, nano-selenium, and nano-copper may improve antioxidant status, immune responses, reproductive performance, and growth efficiency while reducing environmental excretion of minerals.

- **Precision Mineral Nutrition:**

  Precision livestock farming emphasizes supplying nutrients according to the specific requirements of individual animals. This approach minimizes nutritional imbalances and improves feed efficiency. Precision mineral nutrition utilizes data on milk production, body condition, reproductive status, and physiological stage to optimize mineral supplementation.

- **Digital Monitoring of Mineral Status:**

  Modern technologies such as biosensors, wearable devices, automated feeding systems, and milk analysis techniques are increasingly being used to monitor mineral status in dairy herds. These tools allow early detection of deficiencies and facilitate timely nutritional interventions, thereby improving animal health and productivity.

Economic Impact of Mineral Supplementation:

Economic efficiency is a primary objective of dairy farming, and mineral supplementation contributes significantly to achieving this goal. Although mineral mixtures and mineral bricks constitute only a small proportion of feeding costs, their impact on productivity is substantial.

The most immediate economic benefit arises from increased milk production. Balanced mineral supplementation improves feed utilization, metabolic efficiency, and mammary gland function, resulting in higher milk yields. Even modest increases in milk production can generate considerable additional income over the productive life of a dairy animal.

Improved reproductive performance represents another major economic advantage. Reproductive disorders such as repeat breeding, delayed conception, silent estrus, and retained placenta impose significant financial burdens on dairy farmers. Mineral supplementation reduces the incidence of these disorders, shortens calving intervals, and increases lifetime productivity. Earlier conception and reduced days open contribute directly to improved profitability.

Mineral nutrition also reduces veterinary expenditures by strengthening immunity and preventing deficiency-related diseases. Animals receiving balanced mineral supplementation generally experience fewer health problems, lower treatment costs, and reduced mortality rates. Furthermore, improved

growth rates in calves and replacement heifers enable earlier breeding and more efficient herd replacement programmes.

Several economic analyses have demonstrated that the financial returns obtained from mineral supplementation often exceed the cost of supplementation by several folds. Consequently, mineral mixtures should be viewed not as an expense but as a highly profitable investment in animal productivity and farm sustainability.

Practical Recommendations for Farmers:

Successful mineral supplementation programmes require careful planning and consistent implementation. Farmers should select mineral mixtures from reputable manufacturers and ensure that products meet established quality standards. Supplements should be stored properly to prevent deterioration and contamination.

Mineral mixtures should be incorporated into daily feeding programmes according to the production level, physiological status, and nutritional requirements of animals. Lactating and pregnant animals generally require greater quantities of minerals than dry animals. Calves and growing heifers should also receive adequate supplementation to support growth and skeletal development.

Where daily feeding of mineral mixtures is difficult, mineral bricks or lick blocks may provide a convenient alternative. These supplements should be placed in accessible locations where animals can consume them freely. Farmers should regularly monitor animal performance, reproductive efficiency, and health status to evaluate the effectiveness of supplementation programmes.

Veterinary consultation and periodic nutritional assessment can further improve the success of mineral supplementation strategies. In regions where specific deficiencies are prevalent, area-specific mineral mixtures should be preferred over generalized formulations.

Future Perspectives:

The future of mineral nutrition in dairy cattle lies in precision, sustainability, and technological integration. Advances in nutritional science are expected to result in more efficient mineral delivery systems capable of maximizing productivity while minimizing environmental impact.

Area-specific supplementation programmes will likely become increasingly important as awareness of regional mineral deficiencies grows. The use of chelated minerals and nano-minerals is expected to expand because of their superior bioavailability and effectiveness. Furthermore, developments in genomics and metabolomics may facilitate personalized nutrition programmes tailored to individual animals.

Digital technologies will play a central role in future mineral management systems. Automated monitoring of mineral status through milk analysis, biosensors, and artificial intelligence-based decision support systems will enable early detection of deficiencies and more precise nutritional interventions.

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Sustainability considerations will also influence future developments. Improving mineral utilization efficiency and reducing mineral excretion will contribute to environmentally responsible livestock production. Consequently, mineral nutrition will continue to evolve as an integral component of sustainable dairy farming systems.

Conclusion:

Mineral nutrition is one of the most critical determinants of productivity, reproductive efficiency, health, and profitability in dairy cattle. Although minerals are required in relatively small amounts, their influence extends to virtually every physiological process, including growth, metabolism, immunity, reproduction, and milk production. Deficiencies of macro minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, and potassium, as well as trace minerals including zinc, copper, cobalt, selenium, iron, and iodine, remain widespread in many livestock production systems and continue to limit animal performance.

The consequences of mineral deficiencies are far-reaching and include poor growth, reduced feed utilization, infertility, delayed puberty, repeat breeding, retained placenta, weak calf syndrome, metabolic disorders, decreased milk production, and increased susceptibility to disease. Many of these deficiencies remain subclinical for extended periods, causing hidden economic losses that often go unrecognized by farmers.

Mineral mixtures and mineral bricks provide practical, economical, and scientifically validated solutions for addressing mineral deficiencies. Their regular use improves reproductive performance, strengthens immunity, enhances growth, increases milk yield, and reduces disease incidence. Recent innovations such as area-specific mineral mixtures, chelated minerals, nano-minerals, precision feeding systems, and digital monitoring technologies have further improved the effectiveness of mineral supplementation programmes.

As dairy farming becomes increasingly intensive and production-oriented, the importance of balanced mineral nutrition will continue to grow. Farmers, veterinarians, nutritionists, and extension personnel must work together to promote awareness regarding mineral deficiencies and encourage adoption of appropriate supplementation strategies. Investing in mineral nutrition represents one of the most cost-effective approaches to improving dairy productivity and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Ultimately, the regular provision of mineral mixtures or mineral bricks should be regarded as an essential management practice rather than an optional supplement. Healthy animals, efficient reproduction, higher milk production, and increased profitability are the inevitable outcomes of a well-designed mineral nutrition programme.

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