

# STEER SALT TRIAL IN MOROBE PROVINCE

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, a lot of articles have been written about the need to feed salt on smallholder cattle projects. However, most didimen and farmers still do not understand the value of feeding salt to cattle. In September 1978, a trial was started on a smallholder cattle project at Situm, in the Morobe Province. The aim of the trial was to teach the cattle farmers in the area the value of salt feeding.

## THE TRIAL

Twelve steers of similar weight, appearance and breeding were divided into two groups of six. One group was fed salt while the other group got none.

The salt was weighed and fed to the cattle in a wooden trough every 2 weeks. When it was clear that the six cattle had enough, the left-over salt was weighed. The difference in the two weights of salt was the amount eaten. The cattle in both groups were also weighed every 2 weeks.

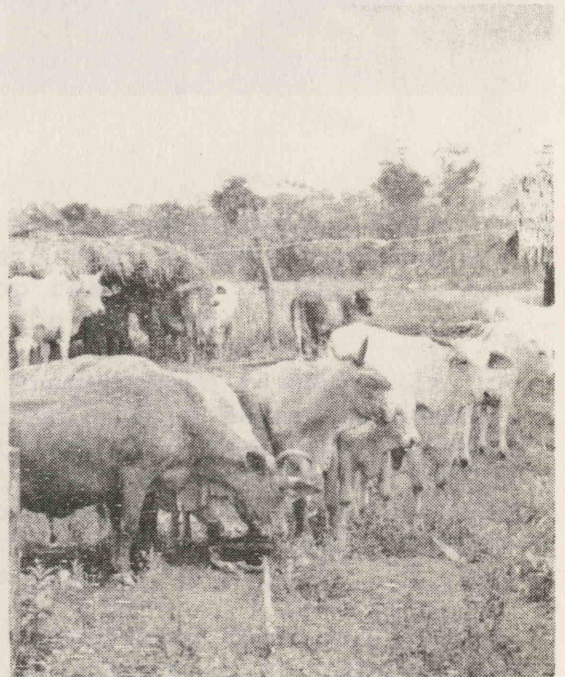
The six steers which were fed salt put on a total of 635 kg in weight during the seven months trial. The steers which did not get any salt put on 518 kg. This means that the steers with salt put on a total of 117 kg

more live weight than those without.

Dressed weight is 56% of live weight so the difference in dressed weight between the two groups was 66 kg. At current Lae abbatoir prices (125 t/kg) this difference in weight is worth K82.50. Since the salt cost only K3.00 over the seven months, the extra money gained from feeding salt was K79.50.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of the trial, a



*Cattle enjoying a salt lick on a project in the Markham Valley.*

field day was held at the project. The way the trial was carried out and the results were explained to 50 cattle farmers from the Situm area. Reports from the Situm District Rural Development Officer show that these cattle farmers are now feeding salt regularly. This is because they understand why salt should be fed and, more importantly, appreciate

the financial gain resulting from regular salt feeding.

Cattle in different districts may respond differently to being fed salt. Any farmer who would like to run his own local trial should get in touch with the O.I.C., Beef Cattle Research Centre, P.O. Box 73, Lae, Morobe Province.

Photograph: Kath Perry

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