

Forage

(Continued from Page 1)

weight, Adams believes. Generally high butterfat tests are associated with high forage consumption, but it sometimes pays to feed lower quality hay — hay with a larger amount of fiber — to slow down the feed in the cow's digestive tract.

With the stress on high grain feeding in the past few years, Adams said many dairymen believe they can cut back on the amount of forage and make up the nutritional difference with grain.

Furthermore, dairymen

should pay particular attention to the percentage of protein in the ration when supplies of hay are curtailed. Adams says the protein content in grain rations should go as high as 25 or 30 per cent when corn silage makes up most of the forage ration.

When corn silage is used primarily to replace hay and a protein deficiency exists, the butterfat content will be adversely affected because the digestibility of the forage is lessened.

Most Cows Underfed

The Penn State researcher said he believes 90 per cent

of the dairy cows in the state are underfed at the present time.

"We know that the average cow in Pennsylvania produces somewhere near 8,000 pounds of milk per year, and we have reasons to believe that the average cow in the state is capable of making near 12,000 pounds. Most of this difference is due to improper feeding," Adams said.

But milk production is not always immediately cut if cows are underfed. In many instances, the cow will continue to make milk, but if she is not being fed sufficient

nutrients, the butterfat content of the milk will be lowered.

What happens in such cases, he explained is that cows take body fat off and turn it into butterfat. This increases the blood fat content and may cause a temporary boost in butterfat, but unless the cow is fed sufficient nutrients to lay down moderate amounts of fat on her body, milk fat content will suffer.

Avoid both thin or over-conditioned cows, since a fatty cow also tends to produce

milk with low fat content. A few years ago, Adams said, some local dairymen purchased Canadian Holsteins, but they were disappointed when the cows didn't test any better than the cows they already had, this was mainly because they didn't feed them any different than they fed their other cows. In Canada, for most part, the cows were on a high forage ration.

As one final word of caution, Adams told dairymen that poor ventilation is one of the major causes of light forage consumption. He said cows must be encouraged to eat large amounts of forage but most of the so called forage extenders cannot be considered in meeting forage needs.

He said while hay is scarce, it is one of the requirements for satisfactory butterfat levels in the milk.

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