

# Are Whole Beans Good

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back meal, said that although it looks like the farmer's getting robbed, this isn't the case. "Soybean oil is worth a lot of money to the processors, more money than its worth to the farmer," he said. "The oil is what pays for all the freight and handling charges. Besides, most of the beans from this area don't go any farther away than Maryland, so there's not really that much freight involved."

Assistant Lancaster County Agent N. Alan Bair said that the economy of feeding raw, cooked or extruded beans is in serious question. "Remember," Bair said, "that the whole bean is only 34 to 38 percent protein, while soybean meal runs around 44 percent. So a farmer who feeds his own beans is feeding less protein in a pound of feed. The fat in the beans also means that you've got to be careful you don't get too much fat in the cows' diet. The upper limit on feeding whole beans is 25 percent of the grain ration. With bean meal, a dairyman could go higher than that, although normally he wouldn't."

Feeding whole beans - raw,

cooked or extruded - to dairy cows is a practice many dairymen have adopted because they feel whole beans, with their higher energy content, are worth more than bean meal, even if they do give up some protein. Some have had good luck with the feed, some have been disappointed.

It's hard to argue with success, especially the kind of success that produces world records in dairy production. Allen Rearick of Millheim, Pa., is a firm believer in extruded soybeans, and he's got the world's butterfat record to back up his claim that it's top-notch dairy feed. His Gladell Governess Bess, a four-year-old Registered Holstein, recently finished a 359-day lactation in which she produced 39,969 pounds of milk and 1913 pounds of butterfat, a world fat record for all breeds and all ages. One amazing thing about this cow is that she gets no special treatment, no special feed. She's just one of the girls.

Another of Rearick's cows finished a lactation with 40,600 pounds of milk, 1686 pounds of fat. In fact, in Rearick's 36-cow herd, 14 animals have pushed

through the 1000 pound fat mark.

Rearick told Lancaster Farming that he'd been using extruded soybeans for just about a year. He buys beans on the open market, and runs them through an extruder which he owns. "When those beans come out of the extruder," Rearick said, "I can give them to a cow that's been off feed and she'll gobble them right up. I think they help me to maximize production because the cows like them."

Rearick feeds his beans as a top dressing on the grain ration. He grows most of his grain needs and buys brewers grains and he feeds his cows all the top-quality alfalfa hay they'll eat.

Gary Stoltzfus, who works for his father on a dairy farm in Elverson, said they tried feeding extruded beans to their herd of 65 Holsteins last year. "Our fat test went up about 2 points to maybe 4 or 4.1 percent," Stoltzfus said, "but I just didn't feel we were getting the milk out of the cows we should have been getting."

The dairyman said that it would probably take about 40 acres of ground to raise enough soybeans to fill their needs for a year. "And then we've got to pay

to have them cooked, we've got to haul them to the cooker and haul them back."

Processing costs for a ton of beans is running about \$10 to \$11 locally, a cost which can't be ignored in figuring the economics of home-grown beans versus purchased bean meal. Another item that can't be overlooked is the cost and availability of custom combining, since most farmers don't have their own combines.

Stoltzfus said they had harvesting problems last year. "We couldn't find anybody to harvest our crop," he said, "and the beans don't do you much good if they're sitting out in the field."

Harvesting problems and-or equipment costs were factors mentioned by several other farmers in their decisions to stay out of soybeans. And at least one farmer said he stopped growing soybeans when his custom harvester left a lot of the crop in the field. "It wasn't his fault, really, it was just that his four-row header couldn't handle the steep slopes that I farm," the farmer said.

Kenneth Rutt, a Quarryville dairy farmer who also raises a considerable quantity of soybeans, said he had never been

able to make the figures favor feeding his own beans. He sells all his beans, sometimes under contract, sometimes on the open market. "Right now, for example," Rutt said, "we can sell our whole beans with 38 percent protein for about \$200 a ton. We can buy 44 percent soybean meal for about the same price. So I can't see any reason for feeding the beans. I know you get the oil, but I'm not so sure I want to give the oil to my cows."

Perhaps the most ardent detractor of feeding whole beans was Dr. Richard Adams, Penn State's extension dairy nutrition specialist. He said, "With beans selling at \$6 a bushel, a guy would have to have rocks in his head to feed them to cows."

Adams also said that historically, it's been economically advantageous to sell beans rather than feed them, but that he wouldn't rule out the possibility of market changes temporarily favoring the feeding of whole beans.

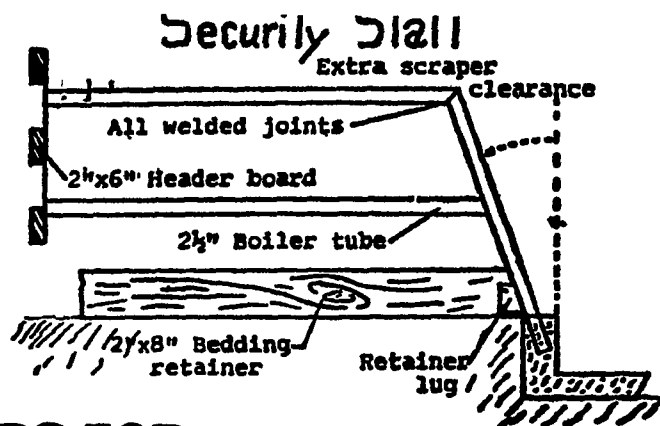
Summing up, there seems to be a lot to say against growing or buying whole beans and feeding them to dairy cows. If the whole bean is fed, it must be ground, and there can be no urea added to the ration. Urease, an enzyme in the uncooked bean, reacts with urea to release ammonia before the feed reaches the rumen, thereby detracting from the ration's nitrogen content. Steam cooking or extruding kills the urease, but costs about \$10 a ton for the treatment. And growing beans means relying on custom operators or buying a combine.

Nevertheless, the practice does have its strong supporters, many of whom claim considerable success with whole beans, raw or cooked, and at least one dairyman who claims extruded beans have brought him a world record in fat production. Farmers who want to feed processed beans will find processing services available from Garber & Shenk, Mount Joy, Mark Hershey, Lebanon, and Stevens Feed, Inc., Stevens.

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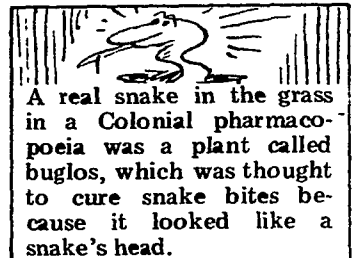
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