

The Dairy Business

By Newton Bair

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FEEDING SYSTEMS DIFFERENT, YET ALIKE

We rarely see a cow anymore that is suffering from "hollow belly." Lots of goodies are available to keep them filled up. But keeping them full is only a small part of a successful, high producing feeding system.

What is a feeding system? It's simply the way that you, as a dairyman, make sure your cows are fed well — not only quantity of feed, but quality and balance of essential nutrients. Systems range from total mixed rations, to complex, individual, spoon feeding programs. And everything in between, including pasture and pseudo-pasture or drylot feeding.

The feeding systems I'd like to discuss are the ones that can be "fine tuned" for

efficient production. Notice that I didn't say maximum production, although that term would come close to what we are looking for. Feeding for efficient production will put more money in your bank account, regardless of production level.

It is difficult, though not impossible, to formulate an efficient dairy production ration using only thumb rules. Forages, which form the basis of all feed programs, can vary greatly in protein, TDN, minerals, and net energy. But they can be analyzed so easily now that it is foolish to guess when you can be sure.

For example, the criteria for putting together a complete ration of forage and grain mixed (TMR), includes analysis of the forages used, and then mixing the concentrates required to balance the

ration together with the forage.

If cows are grouped, for whatever reason, a production level for the group should be established, usually 10 to 15 pounds of milk above the group's average so they can be challenged. The average body weight of the cows in a group must be known because the total dry matter intake must be correlated with both production and body maintenance.

Total dry matter intake can vary from 1.9 pounds per hundred pounds of body weight for dry cows, to 3.8 pounds for a cow milking 80 pounds - Cows milking over 17,000 pounds per lactation will require that 45 percent of their dry matter intake be furnished by grain or concentrates in the total ration. So, careful calculation and blending is essential for these cows to be adequately fed.

Some high producers will need access to an extra concentrate mixture, fed in the parlor or milking stable. This is blended using the same nutritional specifications as the complete ration, except for crude fiber, which will be under 10 percent.

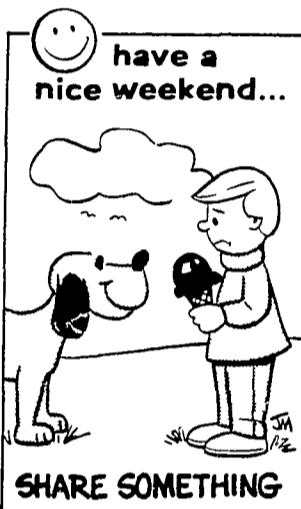
Whether using a total mixed ration system or a conventional spoon feeding one, forages are usually fed free choice out of a bunk or some kind of rack. For smart feeding of con-

centrates, you must have some knowledge about the amount of forages actually consumed.

Volume measurement is not very accurate — weight is much better for calculations, especially when the moisture level is known. And, if moisture levels change, as they will several times each silo is emptied adjustments must be made in forage intake.

Now, all this points up the necessity for great care and concern in formulating a good, efficient ration. Starting with what you have in the barn and silos, there are many choices of grains and concentrates to supplement it. The important consideration is that you take time to analyze, weigh, calculate and formulate for correct balance and reasonable cost. Then apply the master touch in feeding for top profits.

No feeding system is best. Select the one that suits your needs best. Like the hired man used to say, there's more than one way to skin a cat — or feed a cow.



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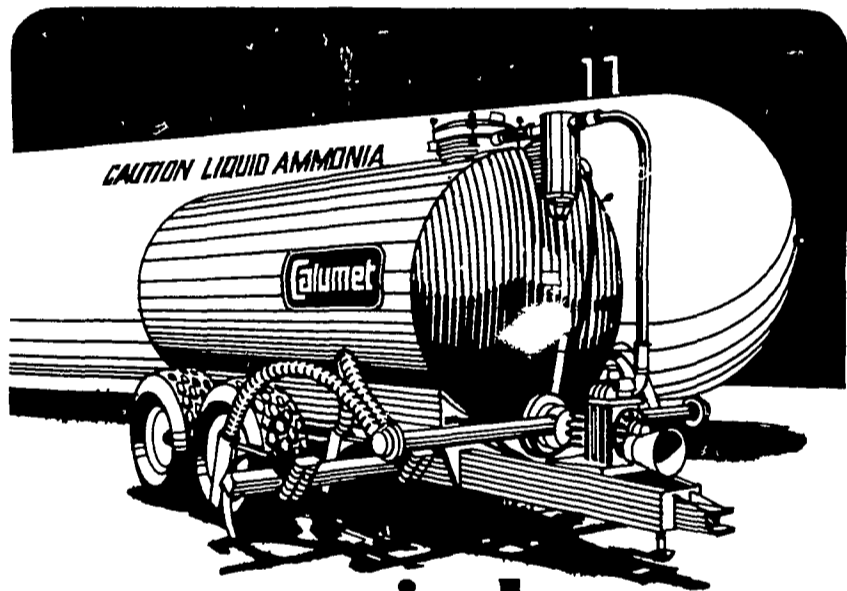
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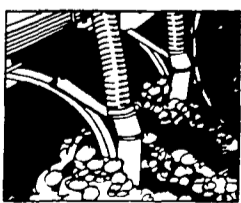
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