

## Dairy Pipeline

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### Good Herd Performance Starts With Good Feeding

The forages and grain crops you harvested this summer and fall will probably form the nucleus of your dairy feeding program. Chances are, your herd will be consuming these forages throughout the entire winter feeding program and well into next year's growing season.

Needless to say, the quality of the feeds you have in storage now can have drastic effects on your herd's health and performance - your profits - for many months.

Nutrient quality of our feeds this year may vary from that of normal years, and thus it may be necessary to re-formulate your dairy rations to compensate for these variations. Some of our drought-stricken corn silage has been running higher in protein.

Some corn silage, and other crops, were ensiled at lower-than-usual moisture levels; these feeds may have undergone abnormal fermentation which could result in spoilage and mycotoxin production, heat-damaged protein, abnormal acid levels, etc. Silo gas was quite prevalent, too. So, excess nitrates and non-protein-nitrogen may be a problem in some forage supplies. Palatability and digestibility could also be affected.

I am not attempting to use scare tactics to get you unduly alarmed; I only want to emphasize that this is a good year to do a lot of early forage testing in an attempt to prevent problems before they occur.

### Feeding Meeting

This is a good time to remind dairymen in and around Lancaster County that a dairy feeding meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, November 4 (election day) at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Topics will include: The Dairy Feed Situation - quality, supply and price outlook; Special Health

Problems Related to Nutrition - appetites, foundering, fat tests, mold mycotoxin problems, non-protein-nitrogen and nitrates; Managing Dairy Herds to Keep Cows Eating, Healthy and Productive; and Feeding Alternatives and Economics.

For some dairymen, feeds are in short supply and purchased feeds are expensive. They may find it expedient to graze many of their fields this fall, or to shop wisely and stock up on necessary feeds. Or, it may be an excellent time to cull the herd and to merchandise some heifers.

In other words, reduce the herd to the size of the feed supply available. Put your limited supply of feed into the heavy producers - the cows that are earning you a higher return over feed costs.

If necessary, the revenue from sale of cattle could be used to purchase necessary feeds for the remaining higher producers. It would be a costly mistake to short

change the higher producers or to stunt a heifer's growth by underfeeding.

### Making Feeding Programs Work

Work closely with your feedman and your veterinarian. Health, nutrition and herd performance go hand-in-hand. Invest in forage testing, and remember, the test results can be no more accurate than the sample you submit to the lab. Even consider testing your forages several times throughout the winter and spring months, especially if you have a larger than average herd.

I realize this can get to be very expensive, but improper feeding and poor herd performance is far more costly.

Don't stop just with forage testing. Also request a recommended feeding program, one for the dry cows plus one or more for the milking herd. And, be sure to have your program updated frequently, whenever there is a change in forage intake,

forage quality or herd health.

Remember, too, the kind of feeding program which is recommended for your herd can be affected more by the accuracy of the information you put on the questionnaire form (cow weights, forage intakes, etc.) than by the kind and quality of forage tested. Read that last sentence again; it is very important.

In other words, weigh the forages - several times - to get an accurate average intake, being sure to deduct for the forages that are refused or wasted.

And, remember, a herd receives a balanced ration only when the cattle are consuming exactly what the program recommends. If the cows are not eating what is recommended try to find the reason why - that's easier said than done - and have the program re-formulated based on their actual feed intake.

Good feeding, good herd performance, and good herd profits seldom just happen. They usually result from attention to a lot of details.

Contact your feedman or your extension agent for forage test kits and feed program request forms.

### Tax course offered

Penn State will offer a Farm Income Tax and Social Security Short Course on Dec. 8-12.

The five-day course is approved for continuing education credit by the Accreditation Council for Accountancy, Washington, D.C. and is sponsored by the College of Agriculture in cooperation with the Internal Revenue Service, Pittsburgh.

Advance registration is requested, and early registration is advised due to anticipated large attendance.

For further information contact your county extension office, phone (717) 394-6851 requesting the flyer and application form for the Farm Income Tax and Social Security Short Course.

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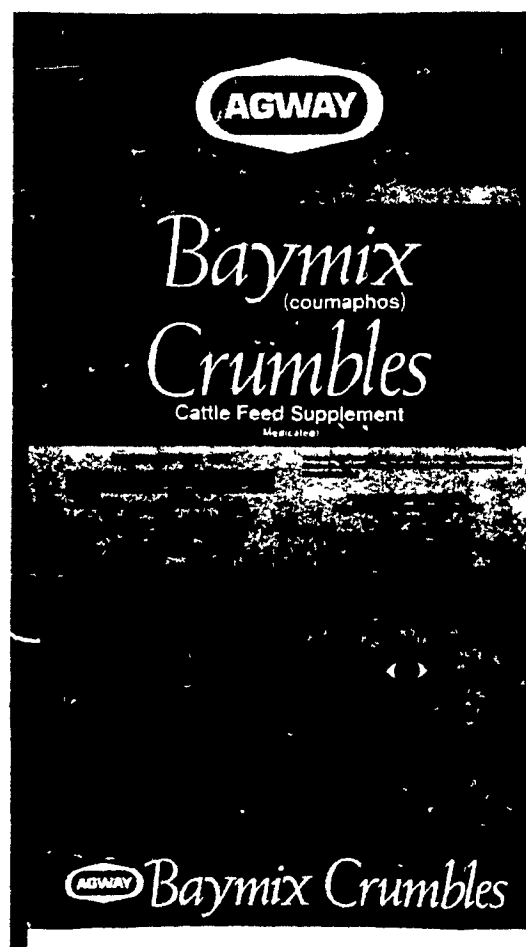
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