

Drought aftermath to hurt in the pocketbook

LANCASTER — The aftermath of this summer's drought will be felt for some time to come, particularly during the long, cold winter months just ahead.

And it will be felt right where it hurts most — in the pocketbook.

That's what Lancaster County dairymen heard at a special dairy meeting called by the Extension Service at the Farm and Home Center on Tuesday.

In addition, the dairymen were told that additional drought-related troubles may show up this winter in the form of herd health problems linked to nutrition deficiencies in feeding programs.

Richard Adams, Penn State Extension nutritionist, told the audience that they could look forward to about a \$60 to \$80 per cow drop in their cash flow situation in upcoming months. Farmers' individual financial situations can be further worsened by the drought, depending on how much feed must be purchased.

Adams explained that dairymen have been experiencing primarily only paper profits during the past few years, which are caused by the increased value of their livestock inventories.

"Increased prices for inputs will further erode cash flows," he said.

Concerning future prices of feed, Adams foresees little advance in corn prices beyond a range of \$3.50 to \$3.80 a bushel. But soybean meal prices are likely to advance as high as \$16 hundredweight.

As the winter advances, the hay market will tighten

and prices advance, particularly in February or March.

Nearby breweries should be considered more as a source of feed, according to Adams. Prices of wet brewers grains are now running between \$20 to \$35 a ton delivered in the State College area, he said.

"At present-day concentrate prices," he said, "you can afford to pay even more for brewers grain, as much as \$40 a ton."

"Even at that price, you can make it pay in your feeding programs."

Adams gave a word of caution concerning feeding of apple pomace. He urged testing before feeding to determine how much rice hulls or wood chips are in the pomace. While these additions increase the efficiency of apple processing, they do just the opposite for dairy cows because of poor digestibility.

Apple pomace could be fed to young stock or dry cows, but not to milking cows, he said.

Dr. Larry Hutchinson, Penn State Extension veterinarian, covered a wide range of nutritionally-related health problems that could show up this winter.

One of these are the mold toxins caused by moldy feed. Hutchinson warned that stunted or insect-damaged corn or small grains are more susceptible to these mycotoxins if temperature and moisture conditions are conducive to their development in storage. Suspected feed should be

sampled adequately and tested at the lab at Sumnerdale.

Nitrates is another area of concern. Dry growing conditions coupled with high manuring practices are one of the high risk situations in which higher nitrate levels can occur.

Drops in butterfat levels, such as three-tenths to four-tenths of a percent below customary levels, may be linked to feed nutrition. Such drops are generally caused by abnormal function of the rumen due to any number of factors. These can include high concentrate-low roughage diet, lack of long-stem forage, old poorly fermented silage or the like.

"Buffers, even alfalfa hay, can help to bring the butterfat back up," Hutchinson said.

"But you must also look to correct the high risk situations which caused the drop."

A final health problem related to nutrition and feeding is founder in dairy cattle. It can usually be traced to sudden changes in feeding programs, such as

switching from an all-hay ration to a high corn silage-grain ration at calving time.

Founder can not only affect milk production, but can cause permanent chronic hoof trimming problems, he said.

He urged dairymen to pay more attention to ration changes during the two weeks before calving and about four weeks following calving.—DA

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