

The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

FALLACIES AND FANCIES IN FEEDING

If there is any good to be gleaned or lesson to be learned from our mistakes, I guess the first thing to do is admit that a mistake can be made. It's not easy to look at ourselves and detect the little personal hang-ups that might be slowing down the progress we dream about.

So, let's stand way back and take a critical look at some of the little things that most often keep a fairly good herd from becoming an excellent herd.

Since almost all herds today have the same genetic potential for production, why is there so much variation in actual performance?

The most important single factor is in feeding. Sure, there are other management skills involved, but feeding practices vary more than any other thing that effects production.

Forages account for about 60 percent of the total ration fed to dairy cows. Since the nutrient content of hay, haylage and silages can vary tremendously, the skillful feeder must know the quality of his forages in order to formulate a balanced ration for high production and reproduction.

I've recently taken a critical look at the forage analysis reports in our county. The extension office receives a copy of every sample that is tested at Penn State. Hay samples will vary in Crude Protein from a low of 6.1 percent to a high of 21.5 percent. The average is around 15 percent crude protein.

Calcium varies from 50 percent to 1.58 percent, and Phosphorus runs between 14 and .45. Haylage samples, all mixed mainly Legumes (MML) run from 8.7 percent to 20.8 percent Crude Protein (dry matter basis) and the Calcium and Phosphorus content vary similar to the hay samples.

You can see that the difference between the low and high test figures are nearly threefold! So any attempt to balance a ration for high producers using average figures for hay or haylage would be a prime fallacy and very costly, either in terms of lost production or over-feeding high priced protein.

Another common error in feeding that's often overlooked is failure to weigh, or at least estimate accurately the amounts of forage actually eaten by the cows. We are more prone to

weigh or measure the grain than the silage and hay, especially when feeding large groups out of a bunk.

Take a few minutes periodically and weigh the silage in a 10 foot section of the bunk before the cows disturb it. You can then quickly estimate the contents of the bunk for that feeding and divide it by the number of cows fed, to get the weight of silage eaten by the average cow.

Assume that the heavier milkers eat more than the lighter milkers.

Another mistake that will short change the cows is guessing at the moisture content of silages. There can be as much as 20 percent variation in the moisture of different samples of haylage from the same silo. A sudden change in the moisture of silage as fed can rob the cows of needed dry matter intake, and also can signal a change in the nutritive content of their feed.

Obviously, the only way to avoid mistakes in feeding is to measure, weigh, test, calculate and formulate. Avoid averages and "guesstimates" as much as possible, and then remember that the best possible feed program on paper isn't worth a nickel until it is reproduced accurately in the feed bunk.

The cow must actually eat the proper ratios of hay, silage, grain and supplement. Unfortunately, she can't read the paper with her feed program on it, and I'm not sure that she would like it any better if she could.

But you have control of what is laid before your cows to eat, and it can make a big difference in the health and productivity of your herd, and also in your profits.

Goats to appear for first time at Farm Show

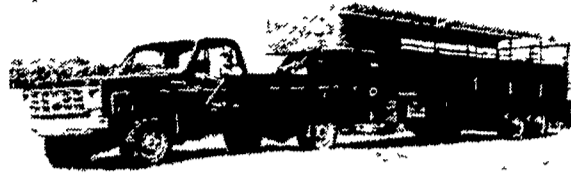
HARRISBURG — A Dairy Goat show will be held at the Harrisburg Farm Show building for the first time. The show will be run by the Blue Mountain Dairy Goat Association, and it will be held during the Farm

Equipment Expo in March. It will be an open doe show sanctioned by the American Dairy Goat Assoc. The does must be in place by March 4, 9 p.m. for a pre-show milkout at 10 p.m. The show will be held

March 5. The BMDGA is one of the largest dairy goat associations in Pennsylvania. For more information, please contact Sally Ann Rehrig, RD 4 Box 401-A, West Bownans, Pa. 18235.

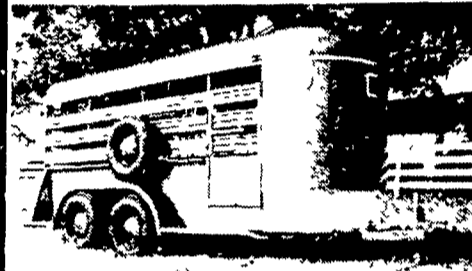
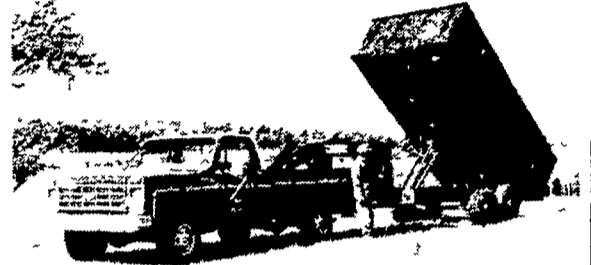
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PROPERTY IN NAME OF		PRESENT MORTGAGE BALANCE \$		TODAY'S PROPERTY VALUE \$	
YOUR EMPLOYER		HOW LONG?		YEARLY GROSS INCOME \$	
BUSINESS PHONE		OTHER INCOME		YEARLY GROSS INCOME \$	
NAME OF CO-APPLICANT		LAST	FIRST	MIDDLE	AGE
RELATIONSHIP TO APPLICANT		CO-APPLICANT'S SOC SEC #		BUSINESS PHONE	
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