

Dairy Pipeline

By
Glenn A. Shirk
Extension
Dairy
Agent

Feed 'em By Weight and Production

If I asked you how much forage you feed your cows per day, what would your answer be? Would it be, for example, 15 pounds of alfalfa haylage, 5 pounds of alfalfa hay and 35 pounds of corn silage per cow, per day?

Then, if I asked you how much grain and supplement you feed, would it be a flat amount for all cows, or would it vary according to milk production? No doubt you feed grain according to production levels, and hopefully, according to condition of flesh, stage of pregnancy and rate of body growth as well, while also keeping an alert eye on appetite and forage-to-grain ratios.

Why then, don't we consider body weight when we feed forages. Surely, that 1,600-pound cow has a much greater need—and desire—for forage than that small 1,100 pounds first calf heifer! Just observe how that big cow steals forage from the smaller heifer standing beside her, or how she controls the feed bunk until her appetite is satisfied.

When you feed every cow the same amount of roughage, as if they are all the same weight, you could run into some problems, similar to what I observed on a farm recently. This dairyman was

running a herd test of 2.6 percent fat, down from 3.8 percent two months ago. That alone was costing him about \$2 a hundred on his milk check! Over half the herd tested less than 3 percent and almost a quarter were under 2 percent. Most of his low testers were his big mature heavy-producing cows and his smaller heavy-producing heifers.

His recommended feeding program looked satisfactory to me—for his average-sized cow. And they were holding their test and appetites better than the problem cows. The forages, which I used as an example in the first paragraph, were of good quality. He also was feeding high-moisture ground ear corn, pelleted supplements and several buffers. I won't bother you with the specific rates. They were fed separately—not blended—in a tie stall barn.

Minimum Forage Intake

After calculating dry matter intakes and comparing the ratio of forage to grain, here is what I found.

The heaviest cows were con-

suming 1.2 pounds of forage dry matter per hundred pounds of body weight compared to 1.8 for the smallest heifers. Our minimum recommendation is 1.4 pounds for a short duration of 3 to 4 months and 1.8 pounds for extended periods. So, his big cows simply were not consuming enough forage to meet these minimum requirements that are essential for normal rumen function.

About two months ago, they started weighing the grain religiously. The cows responded with increased production. We suspected the cows were receiving more grain, now that it actually was being weighed. Further calculations revealed that grain-to-forage ratios were satisfactory for the average-sized cow of average to lower production. But as production—and grain intake—increased on the smaller heifers, we found that 56 percent of their total dry matter came from grain. This would be okay if she ate all the forage put before her, and if the big cow next door did not steal any of her forage.

The maximum amount of total dry matter intake coming from grain should generally be kept under 55 percent; this is a guideline, and there are exceptions. If these heifers, for some reason, were not consuming their full allotment of forage, this percentage could climb to over 60 percent. Then, she is a good candidate for digestive disturbances and low fat tests. This was definitely the problem with his big, heavy producing cows that were on heavy grain feeding and minimum forage intake.

You ask, "How do you solve this problem in a tie stall barn or in any feeding system where cows can steal from one another?" It's hard, unless you go to a blended ration, and that isn't convenient or economical for every situation.

The other alternative is to feed forages lavishly enough to have a margin of safety to compensate for variations in intake.

Pelleted Feeds

Remember, I mentioned that pelleted supplements were being fed in this situation. When high levels of grain and minimal amounts of forage are being fed, and when fat tests are depressed, consider feeding non-pelleted feeds. Pelleted and heat-processed feeds can be fat depressants, particularly under these circumstances.

Also consider feeding more frequently or blending some of the grain in with the forage. This should help keep the rumen more stable and functioning at a higher level of efficiency.

And, when you are on a minimum forage program, you may have to offer cows more

forage as you pump more grain into them in an effort to help them sustain high levels of production. This will help maintain a desirable forage to grain ratio, percent appetites and help maintain reasonable fat tests. It's going to be hard to maintain high production and high fat tests at the same time.

Think of fat tests as a cows barometer. Fat production is a luxury chore for the cow. When something goes wrong or when the cow is "stressed" with high production, high temperatures, rumen "upsets", etc., fat tests is one of the first things affected.

So when tests drop suddenly and drastically, and stay there, it should be a warning signal to you to check on the cause, and to take correction active before severe herd health problems develop.

Pa. commercial red meat production down 9 percent

HARRISBURG — Commercial red meat production in Pennsylvania during December 1981 totaled 79.2 million pounds, down nine percent from a year earlier, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Cattle slaughter, at 70,200 head, increased 13 percent from last December, while calf slaughter increased 24 percent to 28,700 head.

Hog slaughter, at 206,500 head, decreased 31 percent from 1980 levels. The number of sheep and lambs slaughtered totaled 14,600, up five percent from December 1980.

U.S. commercial red meat production during December totaled 3.42 billion pounds, up two percent from December 1980. Beef

production, at 1.90 billion pounds, was up two percent while average liveweight increased one pound to 1,078 pounds. Veal production at 40 million pounds increased 14 percent and average liveweight decreased to 239 pounds.

Pork production totaled 1.45 billion pounds, up one percent. The average liveweight of hogs slaughtered increased one pound to 247 pounds. Lamb and mutton production increased seven percent to 30 million pounds with an average liveweight of 111 pounds.

Commercial red meat production includes slaughter in federally inspected and other plants, but excludes animals slaughtered on farms.

SOLAR-PAK MODEL
magnu
by PARMAK

Solar powered electric fencer uses free energy from the sun. Maximum power... longer life...no operating costs. All new, 12-volt, solid state circuitry reduces battery drain to the minimum shocks through wet weeds and brush.



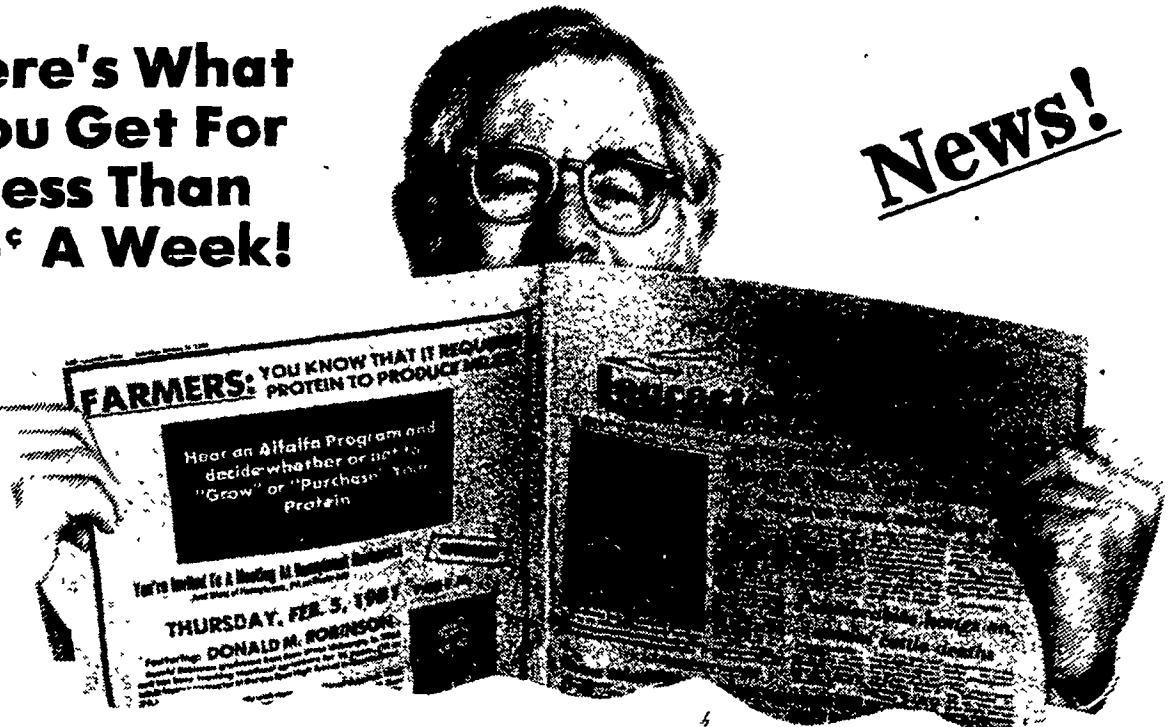
Available with or without panel
FULL TWO-YEAR WARRANTY

For all your fencer needs, it will pay you well to start with, or switch to, the oldest name in electric fencers and the world's largest selling brand...
PARMAK

IF YOUR LOCAL DEALER DOES NOT HAVE IT, CONTACT
PEQUEA BATTERIES
Ronks, PA 17572
Distributor & Warranty Station for Parmak

Here's What You Get For Less Than 15¢ A Week!

News!



- ★ **UP TO THE MINUTE REPORTS** on legislation, meetings and events of interest to the beef, hog, poultry and crop farmers, plus...
- ★ **DAIRY COVERAGE**...more dairy news in each issue than appears in any other weekly newspaper!
- ★ **DHIA REPORTS** from dairy counties in Pennsylvania and Maryland!

Our total farm coverage also gives you **FEATURES...MARKET REPORTS...BEST BUYS ON PRODUCTS & EQUIPMENT...FREE MAILBOX MARKET...and much, much more!**

At LANCASTER FARMING, we think we do a good job of keeping you informed...and we have over 39,000 paid subscribers who think so too!



Lancaster Farming

P.O. Box 366, Lititz, Pa. 17543
Phone
717-626-1164 or 394-3047