

Use care when feeding byproducts, advises dairy specialist

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Use of byproduct ration ingredients may be one way for dairy producers to cut feed costs in tough economic times. But extra care must be taken when formulating rations that contain these feedstuffs, according to Barney Harris, Extension dairy specialist at the University of Florida.

Inconsistency of nutrient content is a primary consideration when feeding any byproduct ingredient, Harris says. That's why the nutritionist recommends a program of feed nutrient testing and ration balancing to make sure the ration meets all nutrient requirements.

Digestive problems associated with feeding byproducts that contain limited fiber can be prevented by addition of sodium bicarbonate at .75 percent of the total ration dry matter. Sodium bicarbonate is a natural com-

ponent of saliva and helps maintain the proper rumen pH.

"When there is an inconsistency in ration ingredients, sodium bicarbonate can help stabilize the cow's level of production and feed intake," Harris says.

Wet brewer's grains, wet distiller's grains, citrus pulp, cottonseed hulls, soy hulls, dried citrus pulp and molasses are some of the byproduct ingredients which are commonly added to dairy rations.

Wet brewer's grains are the residue left after the fermentation of barley or other small grains during the manufacture of beer. Wet distiller's grains are a similar byproduct of corn fermentation during whiskey manufacturing. These are highly palatable nutrient sources for dairy cattle.

"With any high moisture ingredient, dairymen located near the source have an advantage

because of the high costs of transportation," Harris says.

"Wet brewer's or distiller's grain's are excellent for large herds since consumption is rapid and storage time on the farm is short." Storing for more than three or four days frequently leads to fermentation problems, especially during hot weather," he adds. Most dairymen prefer feeding 30 to 40 pounds of wet brewer's grains per cow per day or 25 percent of the total ration on a dry matter basis.

Wet citrus pulp is available after a freeze and is used as a supplementary feed or for wintering cattle. The wet pulp is usually mixed with 15 to 25 percent ground hay to give texture before ensiling. Consumption of the citrus silage is generally from 20 to 30 pounds per head per day.

Cottonseed hulls are a major source of roughage in many dairy rations, added at 20 to 30 percent of the ration dry matter. Also, whole cottonseed has recently become

popular since oil prices have declined and cottonseed is favorably priced. Harris recommends adding whole cottonseed at 10 to 15 percent of the total ration or about 5 to 7 pounds daily per cow.

Another byproduct roughage is

soy hulls, which Harris recommends feeding at levels of 15 to 25 percent of the total ration dry matter.

"Since soy hulls contain a very low level of effective fiber, high levels can reduce digestibility of the ration," he cautions.



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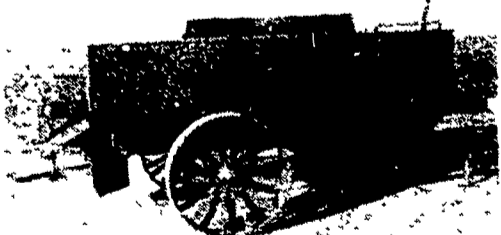
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