

Buffers can help in dairy rations

STATE COLLEGE — The major goal discussed at Dairy Day on Tuesday at Penn State was to feed and manage the lactating cow for her most trouble-free, efficient performance.

Providing dairymen with an update on the dietary additives for lactating cows was T.F. Sweeney, Assistant Professor of Dairy Science. Concerning the most widely used and popular buffer, sodium bicarbonate, Sweeney explained because of the shifts in types and amounts of feed, buffers were recommended for most dairy rations today. At a cost of 7 to 9 cents a day, cows do consistently better with less stomach problems.

Beta Carotene, according to Sweeney, is extremely beneficial in getting cows bred back. Present in high quality forage, carotene (vitamin A) is needed in reproductive efficiency. At a feeding level of 300 mg./day for 100 days, beta carotene would cost 35 cents per cow per day. To recommend this in a normal feeding program without sufficient need would be a mistake, ac-

ording to Sweeney.

The problem of heat detection is present in every herd. According to T.J. Alexander, Graduate Assistant in Dairy Science at Penn State, approximately half of the heats are not observed in any given herd. The fault, although partially attributed to the poor observation, record keeping, poor housing, or general mismanagement of the dairyman, can also be blamed on the cow. According to Alexander, there are cows that are in heat and many times the herdsmen will not mount the cow in heat. Alexander outlined the research done on this subject to determine how this situation could be corrected.

Preliminary findings show cows in mid-cycle display less mounting of herdsmen in heat, with 50% of cycling herdsmen not interested. The idea of introducing an unfamiliar cow into the herd to induce more heat behavior shows promise but more experimentation is needed.

Continuing the program, M.L. O'Connor, Assistant Professor of Dairy Science Extension, spoke on

"Trouble Shooting Reproductive Problems." Reminding dairymen that if their feeding program is on key and management is there, problems will be at a minimum, O'Connor said that the lack of awareness to a problem, labor that is spread too thin, and the failure to delegate responsibility will lead to

an unprofitable calving interval.

Concluding the 1983 program, C.W. Heald, Associate Professor of Dairy Science Extension, reviewed the basic benefits of somatic cell testing. Stating that "prevention is the name of the game for mastitis," Dr. Heald reviewed what happens in an udder when an

infection is introduced. Because cells are destroyed with mastitis, a dairyman will not recover the loss of milk and cost of antibiotics in a lactating cow.

Dr. Heald's concluding tips for dairymen were to minimize machine stripping, prevent mastitis first, keep udders as clean as possible, dry treat all cows, use the CMT test when milking, and strive to maintain a low somatic cell count.

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