

Computers & crops concern are keys to dairy gains

SOMERS, Ct. — The quality of your dairy ration, to a large extent, determines the quality and quantity of your herd's milk production. With that in mind, the Lipton family of Somers, Ct., has fine-tuned cropping practices on their 1,200-acre farm and installed a computerized feeding system to help boost production of their partly registered Holstein herd.

Si Lipton and his sons, Bill and Jeff, who operate Pleasant View Farm, make quite a team. Si and Jeff handle the cropping aspects while Bill is responsible for the dairy. The rolling herd average for their 225-cow herd is 19,500 pounds milk with a 3.7-4.02 percent butterfat average — well above the state's average of 13,122 pounds milk and 3.62 percent butterfat.

Luke Bill, Si and Jeff also have impressive records to show for their cropping efforts. They won first place in the 1982 National Corn Growers Association yield contest in the Class A non-irrigated division, with an entry of 144.6 bushels per acre. Their yield may have been higher, but a heavy rain and wind storm prior to harvest damaged 20 percent of the crop, which couldn't be picked with the combine.

Their ability to produce only the best quality grain and forage contributes significantly to the success of the dairy. "High-quality forage and grain are the most important keys to producing high-quality milk," observes Bill.

"Our cropping program and the dairy complement each other," Si agrees. "We provide good feed so our herd can produce at high levels."

High quality forage

According to Bill, it's possible to have two balanced rations that are

identical, except one has higher-quality forage. "Cows fed higher-quality forage will produce more; there's just no comparison between the two. And I depend on my dad and brother to grow a good quality crop," he says. To do that they must keep the weeds and bugs out, and harvest the crops at the right stage.

Si and Jeff pay as much attention to their regular cropping program as they did to their award-winning NCGA plot, which was planted to Northrup King PX87 on May 4 of that year. The Liptons used a plant population of 27,500 and 30-inch rows on ground that had been moldboard plowed and disked twice in the spring. To produce their winning yield, they plowed down fertilizer with an actual analysis of 175-0-230 along with 1 ton of liquid lime, 100 pounds of 8-40-5 starter fertilizer and 60 pounds of liquid nitrogen. Furadan was also used for insurance against insect infestations.

Using liquid nitrogen as a carrier, the Liptons surface applied a tank mix containing Lasso plus Bladex to control their main weed threats of foxtails, crabgrass, lambsquarter and fall panicum as well as to reduce competition from velvetleaf.

Using similar cropping practices, the Liptons raised 500 acres of corn in 1983. That same year they also raised 300 acres of alfalfa, 250 acres of mixed hay and 40-50 acres of rye. The remaining land was in pasture.

Silage yield

Much of the grain, silage, alfalfa and hay raised on the Connecticut River Valley farm is consumed by the dairy herd. But the Liptons, who have built a reputation for quality crops, also sell some of

their excess yields to neighbors.

"Usually we chop 300 acres of silage and harvest 200 acres of grain corn. However, it was dry in 1983. We had no rain from June 28 to the end of August, so we cut it all for silage," notes Si. "We had insured our corn under the Federal crop insurance program and all fields were checked at harvest. However, we still got 16-18 tons of silage per acre because of excellent weed control."

Although the state's average is 16.5 tons silage per acre, the Liptons average 25-30 tons per acre in a normal growing year. One reason for their silage-growing success is the careful attention paid to soil fertility and weed control.

"Our fields are soil-tested on a regular basis, and corn fields are fertilized to produce 28 tons of silage," explains Si. To reach that goal, the Liptons broadcast 175 pounds of nitrogen and 220-230 pounds of potash after spring plowing. The fertilizer is harrowed in and N-Serve is also applied when the threat of leaching is of concern.

They planter-apply an 8-40-3 starter fertilizer along with magnesium, sulfur and zinc. In 1983 the Liptons seeded NK PX87, PX9527 and Agway 650 and 600 in 30-inch rows at a population of 28,000 in May.

Weed Control

Last year, the Liptons surface applied a tank mix containing Lasso plus Bladex or Lasso plus atrazine using liquid nitrogen as a carrier to control weed problems similar to those found in their NCGA plot. On fields with nutsedge infestations, the Liptons Surface Blend one of the two tank mixes, using Lasso at a higher labeled rate.



Si Lipton, of Somers, Ct., checks some of the corn silage used in dairy herd ration.

"Our Lasso fields were in good shape," reports Si. "And because we often seed corn ground to small grain or alfalfa, we don't have to worry about carryover with Lasso."

"Weed control is important whether you sell your crop or feed it," continues Si. "Weeds steal nutrients and moisture from your corn crop if not controlled. We're satisfied with Lasso; it does a good

job."

Silage is cut in early September when corn is near the dent stage. High-moisture corn is usually harvested at 24-28 percent moisture and then stored in Harvestores. Despite the drought, the Liptons harvested 16-18 tons of silage per acre, while in 1982 they harvested 30 tons per acre, Si recalls.

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