

Balance dairy rations with lactation stages

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — Dairy farmers who want to cut feed costs by reducing protein need to examine feeding practices before making changes.

"Remember, nutritional requirements for lactating and dry dairy cows have changed," says Dr. Rodney Dennis, dairy research specialist for Central Soya Company Inc., manufacturer of Master Mix feeds. "Feeding required nutrients at the proper stage of lactation and in the dry period is essential."

"Overfeeding late lactating and dry cows and underfeeding early lactating cows are still common practices for many dairy farmers," Dennis says. "This is not cost-effective."

Research has shown additional protein is needed by high producing cows in early lactation

because cattle don't eat enough to satisfy body maintenance and milk production needs. In contrast, late lactating cows require less protein due to decreasing milk production.

The dairy specialist says feeding a well-balanced ration in early lactation will increase milk production and profitability. Recently freshened cows require a fortified grain mix which consists of 50 to 60 percent of the ration dry matter.

"Generally, for each one pound increase in peak milk production, there is a 200-pound increase in the production for that lactation," Dennis notes.

"Adequate crude fiber content at 17 percent should be fed in order to maintain butterfat test and maximize roughage use," he adds. To balance a ration with the right amount of grain, Dennis recom-

mends analyzing roughages for content, particularly crude protein and moisture.

"The few dollars spent on roughage analyses can be recovered many times over in improved feed efficiency and profitability," he says.

Protein is an expensive nutrient, Dennis adds. It takes a tenth of a pound of protein to produce a pound of milk. With protein costing about 25 cents/pound, it costs 2.5 cents to produce a pound of milk.

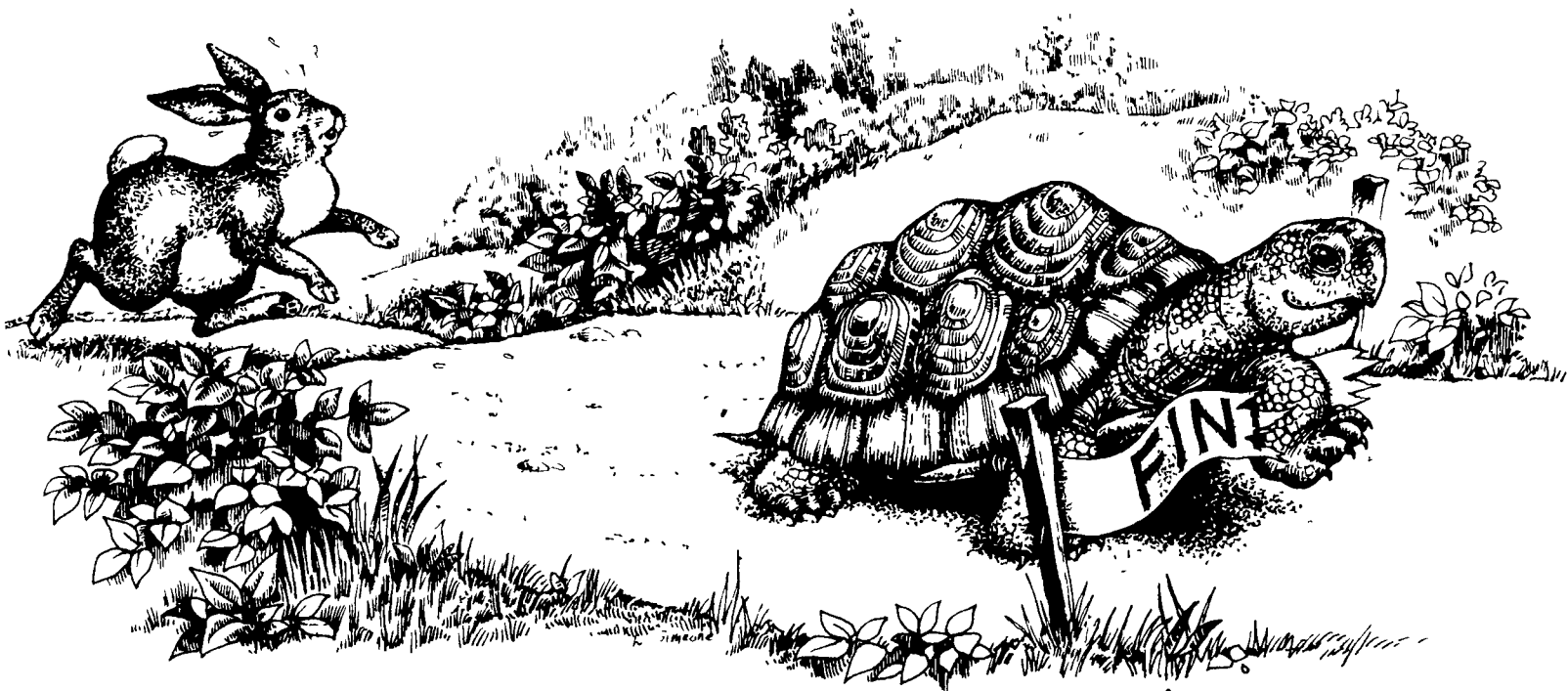
Underfed early lactating cows can't milk enough to justify this protein cost, but when properly fed, they can produce a five-fold return on protein costs, he says.

The Central Soya researcher also points out that less expensive non-protein nitrogen sources, such as urea, can be effectively used in many dairy rations.



Dr. Rodney Dennis, dairy research specialist for Soya Company Inc., says that dairy rations should be balanced throughout the dairy cow's lactation.

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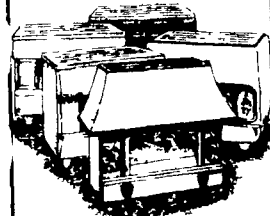
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