

A feedman, consultant and dairyman offer

DAIRY EXCLUSIVE

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
Staff Correspondent

BERKS COUNTY — Colder weather has finally reached us, and another year is drawing to a close. With most of the 1984 harvest in barns and silos, dairymen must take stock of their feed supplies and needs for the winter months. They should also be preparing themselves for perhaps another 50-cent drop in the support price and even leaner times ahead. Little management changes can help reap big differences in production, efficiency and cash flow. Belts must stay tightened and operations fine-tuned.

It is at times like this when the attention paid to the nutritional needs of the money-earners in an operation can make a positive addition to a hurting cash flow. "Know your herd, your farm," many nutritionists, feed salesman, and extension personnel advise.

Following is a question and answer forum between an independent nutritional consultant, a nutritionist-feed salesman, and a dairyman. Their generalized advice and comments uniformly stress saving money through increased awareness and better management of a dairy herd's ration.

First, let's introduce the forum participants:

Dr. Carl Brown, Birdsboro, was born and raised on his father's, Berks County dairy farm. With his education in dairy science at Penn State, genetics at Virginia Polytechnical Institute, and a Ph.D. in nutrition from VPI, Brown has worked as a fieldman for the National Holstein Association, on the extension and teaching staff at VPI, and currently with his family's feed business in Berks County. He is also well-known and liked for his extensive work with 4-H, FFA, and extension in Berks County.

His family's company, F.M. Browns Sons Feeds, is predominant in Berks and adjoining counties plus the northern two counties in New Jersey. Brown personally serves clients in the Hamburg-Berksville area.

"We feel that the more a dairyman knows about feed and feeding programs the better we can work with him," Brown states.

Tim Kissling, R1, Robesonia, received his Bachelor of Science degree in Dairy Production from Penn State. He has a lifetime of experience working with one of the highest producing herds in the state, the Hidden-View Farm herd of his parents, Mr. and Mrs.

Charles Kissling. As the high herd in Berks County for either milk or fat for the last five years, the Kissling herd currently maintains a rolling herd average of 21,300 milk, 3.9% and 841 fat on 65 cows.

Tim has managed the ration for the past six years and the 170-acre farm is operated by his parents, his wife, and himself with some part-time labor. In the past two years, Kissling has set up a private, independent nutrition consultation business and works with clients throughout Berks County.

Kissling credits his wife and parents for managing the home operation while his independent nutritional work takes him away from the farm more and more as he strives to improve his clients' feeding efficiency.

"I look at what is currently there, available facilities, and land," Kissling stresses in his guidance. Before feeding recommendations are made, the entire operation is studied.

Glenn Seidel, R1, Womelsdorf, is the dairyman on the panel. Seidel has put his Bachelor of Science degree and Masters degree from Penn State to good use in the Heindel herd that he and his father, George, have developed into a top Holstein and Ayrshire herd. The Ayrshires on Heindel Farm average over 15,000 pounds milk with a 4.2% test, while the Holsteins tally in with over 19,000 pounds milk and 4.0% test.

Heindel Farms Inc. has maintained the two breeds since 1958 and always believed in maintaining a high test. Twenty-four Heindel Farms, Inc. bulls are currently in A.I. service and breeding stock is scattered in nine countries across the world.

"A dairyman should be trying to get the most back per dollar invested," Seidel firmly maintains.

Proven successful in their operations and businesses, they have the following advice and comments for dairymen.

QUESTION: What is the biggest mistake dairymen are making in feeding their dairy herds?

Brown: "The biggest mistake I see is the constant shifting of rations, particularly this year. Dairymen ought to take stock of their inventories and plan to last the whole year. Not keeping up with their rations during busy seasons," is another mistake Brown also points out. "If a guy has a consistent feeding program of feeding the same roughage all year around, he knows if they (cows) drop, it wasn't because of

the change in his feed. He can fine-tune his ration better."

Kissling: "There is not enough total planning done on a farm where there is matching of land types to forage." Crops should be regulated as to soil types and land availability, according to Kissling. Another problem, he said, is "simply unbalanced rations." "Many feed additives are fed and wasted because they are not needed in all situations. "Observation of and attention to details must be done by the person doing the feeding on a daily basis. Farmers need to be able to follow proper feeding recommendations and spot problems and changes in feedstuffs in order to maintain high production."

Seidel: "The number one mistake is not feeding high quality feeds," Seidel states. "The problem is that you can't always get it." Here is where profitability comes in, according to Seidel. He stresses a close monitoring of "how much money you actually take back over your input." "Strive for high quality feed ingredients," he adds.

QUESTION: Is there a problem in feeding common to this area or state?

Brown: "One of the major problems is not enough emphasis on quality forages - in not putting forage production as the number one priority." Enough of one

forage is not made to last the entire year, according to Brown. "Consistent moisture levels in forages" and "adjustments when moisture changes" also need close attention, Brown adds.

Kissling: "What always works in one area doesn't always work in another area."

Seidel: "With the size farms we have today, it's impossible to consistently make high quality forages in this area." The weather is one of the greatest limiting factors too, according to Seidel.

QUESTION: What do you think of total mixed rations as compared to conventional methods of feeding dairy cows?

Brown: "The thing that I like about TMR is that you get much more accurate information on intake - what the cows are consuming a day." It also gives an advantage in evening out the amount of grain a cow gets in a feeding, Brown adds.

"Rumen health is perhaps a little bit better with TMR. For TMR to work properly, I think grouping is fairly important, whether in the barn or free stalls." There are also some advantages to conventional feeding if the management is there," he adds.

"A good manager can make any system work."

Kissling: "With TMR you gain total control of the ration. A formulation can be mixed exactly to specifications, eliminating the guesswork of feeding by the forkful. You also eliminate the cow's ability to pick and choose what they want to eat. Less stomach upsets and fewer off-feed cows because cows cannot overload on grain without consuming any forages," are also some advantages according to Kissling.

"You can eliminate palatability problems on certain feed ingredients and during changes of feedstuffs. It's much easier to keep cows eating well," he adds. "There is a certain gain in efficiency of digestion when grain and forages are consumed simultaneously. We have been feeding TMR at home for five years and I would never again want to manage a herd of cows without a mixer."

Seidel: "There are good and bad things to TMR." "You can mix good things with bad feed and get something not as bad as before. Inputs are greater with TMR," he explains referring to the equipment involved.

The feedman



Dr. Walter Kennett and Dr. Carl Brown use a computer to help them formulate the rations for clients for F.M. Browns Sons, Birdsboro. Each ration is individualized to the particular herd by monthly visits from the salesmen.

The dairyman



From the left - George Seidel, Samuel Seidel, and Glenn Seidel represent three generations that care for the high producing Holstein and Ayrshire herds at Heindel Farms, Inc., Womelsdorf.

The consultant



Tim Kissling began his independent nutritional consultation work two years ago. Highly successful managing the ration for his home herd, which has been tops in the county for the last five years, Kissling stresses better management of available land resources and feeding equipment for his clients.