

Dairy Pipeline

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Some Summer Concerns

The quality of forage you put into storage this summer is the quality you'll have to live with until next harvest season - unless you purchase a lot of your feeds. High quality forages play a vital part in helping you attain high levels of efficient production. It's just plain difficult to make milk on poor quality forage, and the milk you do make probably costs more to produce!

With this in mind, focus on harvesting and storing high quality forages. Because things never go perfectly as planned, have a place for storing off-quality feeds separately from your high quality feeds. That'll give you much greater opportunity to manage your feed supply and your feeding program. Aim to have the flexibility of accessing whatever feed you want, whenever you want so you can feed the right feed to the right cattle for maximum efficiency.

Aim to have uniform, high quality feed in your silo. Don't salvage a poor harvest by putting it into the silo with good silage; once you get into feeding out the poor section, you've lost your access to the good quality forages your good producers need. They suffer, and you suffer.

Ideally, it's nice to have some extra silos so you can store forages by quality. This is not possible in many cases for several reasons: the herd is too small to feed out of two silos simultaneously or additional silos are not available and it's too costly to erect an additional silo for this purpose.

Another alternative might be to rely on trenches, stacks or bags. And finally, if it's not good enough to feed don't store it, unless you can sell it as compost. In the case of hay, store different quality hays

in different mows or sections of mows. Offering cows a variety of hays and forages is one way of stimulating greater intake, and this can help you accomplish that.

If the hay is not dry enough to bale, and the weather is threatening, don't just "stick it in a bag"; chances are, it'll spoil. To be bagged successfully, hay should be at the moisture level you aim for for ensiling haylage. If it is too dry to bag or ensile and too wet to bale, consider applying a preservative. Or, use chemical conditioners (drying agents) to speed up the drying time of certain forages.

As you are harvesting, sample some of the forages for analysis. Toss aside a few bales, from the different quality batches, and let them dry down before sampling. Pull some haylage samples as you are filling the silo. These haylage samples will give you an advanced estimate of the quality of forages you'll be getting into. It gives you an opportunity to start adjusting feed programs to prepare the herd for upcoming changes in forages as the change occurs - not two to four weeks later, after they've gone off feed.

Later on, once you are into the "new" forage, additional testing will help you to fine tune your ration. Speaking of fine tuning, always, always know what the cows are consuming. You can't do a good job of feeding without this knowledge; nor can your feedman be of greatest service to you!

To do this you need 1.) a moisture tester for measuring the moisture content of your ensiled feeds at least weekly, 2.) a scales for weighing feeds actually fed - and refused or wasted, 3.) a tape or scales for determining body weight and dry matter intakes of individual animals more accurately.

Fat Tests

We're coming into the low fat

test season, but there is a lot you can do to help keep fat tests up. One is to focus on fiber intake.

If forages are greener and more succulent, such as pasture or green chop, the fiber content is lower. Supply more fiber in the remainder of the ration.

If forages and the total ration are wetter, cows need additional fiber to get the job done. The same is true when forages are chopped finely, or when a lot of pelleted feeds are being fed.

If forages are cut at an immature stage for top quality (higher protein), fiber content will be lower, and additional fiber should be fed.

Older, more mature forages, on the other hand, are higher in fiber, but their fiber is more indigestible. Thus, additional sources of digestible fiber may be needed. Don't make the mistake some farmers make; they think they can correct fat test problems by feeding older, longer hay because of its higher fiber content. It won't work. In addition, the reduced digestibility of the fiber will probably reduce total dry matter intake.

Feeding buffers may also help. If high levels of grain are being fed, feed frequently to reduce the amount of grain consumed at any one time. And feed cows forage before offering them large quantities of grain. The forages

will help the cow buffer her rumen in preparation for the acids produced from the digestion of the grains.

When cows get hot, they go off feed, particularly on forages. There's a good reason for this. It takes work for cows to digest fiber, and that produces heat.

To maintain desired levels of forage dry matter intake, keep cows as cool and comfortable as possible. Feed most of the forages in the cooler hours of the day. Keep the feeding area as cool as possible and have fresh water nearby.

Open the sides and ridges of buildings widely. Use shade, fans, and perhaps misters for evaporative cooling. Feed frequently so the forages, particularly ensiled feeds, stay fresh and tingle their appetites with a variety of forages.

Minimize the stress on cows, and don't pack them tightly in holding areas for long periods of time. Have the holding area well ventilated.

Some of the fat test problems can also happen in the milkhouse. If the compressor can't keep up with the filling rate of the tank, and can't cool milk down quickly, churning may result. To help take some of the strain off of over-worked compressors, install a heat exchanger on the milk line so the milk enters the tank at a lower temperature.

Improper cooling could help explain some of the discrepancies between plant tests and DHIA tests. Proper agitation before sampling by the milk hauler and by the DHIA supervisor is also important for accurate results.

McKean Co. DHIA

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Charles Irons	81	88.3	19,027	767
John H Lapp	59	85.9	20,281	739
Thomas Spees	33	86.8	19,312	713
Orton Kinney	28	84.4	18,965	695
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Per	4-8	305	19,755	754
John H Lapp				
Print	1-11	305	21,973	805
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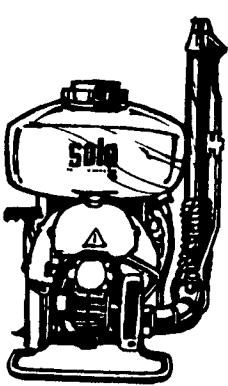
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