

Dairymen Find New Product Increases Production

KENNEDYVILLE — With the top-producing herd in Maryland's Kent County already to his credit, it didn't seem likely that Allan Wright would be able to squeeze three more pounds of milk from each of his cows in a matter of weeks.

But that's exactly what happened on Kalangail Farms near Kennedyville when Wright took the advice of a neighboring dairy manager and tried a new product called Bio-Boost.

"Within a couple of weeks my cows went from an average of 65 pounds of milk a day up to 68 pounds," he reported about his herd that is now boasting a rolling average of over 22,000 pounds. "I was pleasantly surprised at how well it worked."

Bio-Boost is a combination of volatile fatty acids, vitamins and other nutrients and enzymes. It is being used with similar results by a growing number of farmers from the hills of Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee to Maryland's Eastern Shore and New York.

Produced by ROMAK Nutrition of Kennedyville, Md., Bio-Boost is coming available to dairymen through their feed suppliers in the Mid-Atlantic region and parts of the South.

The product's remarkable results are of no surprise to Dr. Marshall E. McCullough, a dairy nutrition specialist at the University of Georgia for 33 years, and a frequent writer for Hoard's Dairyman.

At the university's experiment station, Dr. McCullough fed volatile fatty acids to cows as far back as 1968, when he first recorded their ability to dramatically increase production.

The acids are found naturally in a cow's rumen, reported the recently retired expert, but a product such as Bio-Boost is able to stimulate their production and effectiveness in helping the cow make better use of her feed.

"A cow is a factory," McCullough said. "And like in any other manufacturing process, when there is an increase in the rate of production, there has to be

an increase in the rate of inputs in the factory. That's what is being done with this product. The efficiency of the factory is being increased."

He emphasized, however, that feeding a product like Bio-Boost won't turn an inferior feeding program into a good one. "There's no free lunch in this business," he said. "Farmers have got to incorporate this product with a sound feeding program. That's when they'll see results."

In addition to higher milk production, farmers feeding Bio-Boost has noticed that their cow's manure is finer in texture with less grain, an indication that the digestive process is getting more out of the feed.

"The first thing I noticed was that the fiber in the manure was really fine," said Jonas Stoltzfus of Millington, who began using Bio-Boost in his herd of 55 cows about a year ago. "In less than one week, there was a lot less grain coming through in the manure."

Between January 1985 and April 1986, Stoltzfus' rolling herd average surged from 15,468 pounds of milk and 575 pounds of butterfat to 18,554 pounds of milk and 679 pounds of butterfat.

Because he also changed his ration during that time, Stoltzfus could not assess exactly how much of the 3,000 pound milk increase was attributable to Bio-Boost, but he did say, "I'm personally convinced it increased production."

"It's not magic. You have to have the rest of the ration balanced, too, but the number of times I did run out, I could always tell the difference immediately in the texture of the manure, as well as in production. I'm confident that it has been cost-effective."

Wright, whose rolling herd average increased about 2,000 pounds to 22,002 in just one year, figured that at least 1,000 pounds of the improvement was due to feeding the new product.

"It's easy to get an increase like that when your cows are only milking 45 to 50 pounds a day, but when your production level is that high, that's an impressive in-

crease. I recommend it."

Like Stoltzfus, he also noticed the difference in manure texture. "It looked creamier," he said. "That doesn't mean anything in the milk tank, but it does show that something is happening."

The most well-documented production increase was on Fair Hill Farms in Chestertown, owned by the Fry family. With 520 cows on test, milk production per cow soared five pounds a day in just three weeks.

When Edwin Fry began his test on December 27, the Fair Hill cows were producing just over 59 pounds of milk per day. By Jan. 16, the average was up to over 64 pounds.

At Rockingham Mill in Harrisonburg, Va., sales manager Steve Collins reported that 11 herds began feeding Bio-Boost about three months ago.

"The farmers have been seeing a three to four pound milk increase pretty much across the board," Collins said. "They saw the increases within three weeks. Some saw it in less than two weeks."

Alan Chiles, a dairyman in Auburn, Ky., who is being supplied with Bio-Boost by Music City Supplements in Nashville, said his 55 cows have upped their production between 2.5 and 3 pounds of milk each at a time when they would normally be slacking off.

"They usually drop off pretty fast at this time of year," he said, "so I'm probably seeing more increase than that."

Another benefit farmers feeding Bio-Boost have seen is greater forage bunk life.

"The forage doesn't seem to spoil as quickly, especially in the summer," reported Donald Burdette of Chestertown. "Plus, the cows seem to clean it up a little better."

Which brings up the point of palatability. Dairymen have reported that the cows like the product, and, if anything, eat more feed when it has been added to the ration.

Specific testing on a fistulated cow at Fair Hills in Maryland revealed increased salvia production in the rumen, another indication that digestion is being improved by Bio-Boost. Laboratory testing verified that the increased digestibility results in proper rumen pH, and the bottom line is more energy intake directed towards milk production.

Fair Hills Dairy Manager, Roger McKnight, began researching the role of volatile fatty acids in dairy cattle nutrition when he became aware of a product called IsoPlus, developed by Eastman Kodak Co.

"We developed Bio-Boost because the Kodak product was unobtainable," McKnight explained. "But I think I've come up with something even better."

The primary ingredients in Bio-Boost work differently than do those in IsoPlus, and at least one farmer who tried both was left with no doubt about which was more effective.

"I was on IsoPlus for six weeks and I didn't see any difference," reported dairyman Burdette. "But when I went on Bio-Boost, I saw a big increase and the butterfat percentage stayed the same. I was really surprised."

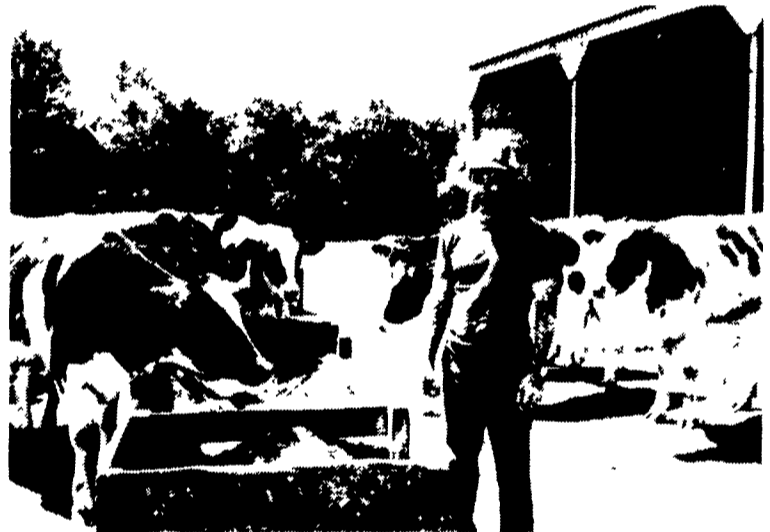
McKnight recommends feeding 2 1/4 ounces of Bio-Boost per cow per day by incorporating it with the total mixed ration or putting it directly onto the forage. If it's mixed with the grain, he recommends that the grain be top dressed on the forage.

To farmers starting with the product, for the first four days McKnight recommends using only half of the suggested rate to make the change more gradual for the cows.

His experience has shown that a



Jonas Stoltzfus



Allan Wright

response is evident within a maximum of three weeks.

From a cost standpoint, Bio-Boost is very economical, McKnight noted. Although prices for the product may vary from area to area, he estimates that the

average cost is just under 20 cents per cow per day.

Farmers interested in trying Bio-Boost should contact their feed supplier for information on availability.

Hog Numbers Plunge

WASHINGTON D.C. — Hog numbers plunged to an 11-year low as of June 1, the USDA announced Monday.

Experts predicted a normal 2 percent decline from last year in the hog population instead of the 7 percent drop indicated by the USDA survey. The number of female hogs kept for breeding declined 9 percent from a year earlier.

As a result of the Monday report, livestock and meat futures soared the permissible limit this week in anticipation of shrinking red-meat supplies.

In the last few years there has been little profit in the hog business, therefore hog producers have severely limited expansion, according to H. Louis Moore, Penn State professor of agricultural economics.

He added that in recent months there has been no expansion due to

decreasing prices. Moreover, publicity from the dairy herd buyout program produced a detrimental psychological effect, causing beef and hog prices to drop even further. With the government adding to the meat supply in this manner, many hog producers felt there was no future in the hog industry.

With the latest USDA report and the futures market up, optimism has returned to the hog market.

Moore speculated that with a favorable corn crop and low prices on corn, producers will begin to think about holding back breeding stock. Offspring from these pigs will not hit the market for seven to ten months, creating a short supply of pork for this period.

Despite the lower pork supplies prices are expected to be held in check by an abundance of beef and poultry.



Donald Burdette



Edwin Fry