

# Dairy Nutritionist Talks About Feeding Practices

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Managing Editor

Dr. Timothy Snyder was recently named the manager of Dairy Nutrition at Pennfield Corp. We asked Dr. Snyder about some of the feeding problems he finds among local dairymen and his thoughts on future feeding practices. Here are our questions and Dr. Snyder's answers.

**Q.** Give a little background of your education and experience.

**A.** A dairy farm in Schuylkill County is where I was raised. My father, uncle and brother currently own that farm. They're milking about 80 registered holsteins with a mid 18,000 per lb. herd average. I attended Delaware Valley College as an undergraduate for four years, 1971 to 1975. Between undergraduate school and my masters degree at Virginia Tech, I worked at the cooperative research farms facility in New York. Then I received my masters degree at Virginia Tech, 1975 to 1977. I spent several months in west Germany on a dairy farm after that. Traveled a little bit, worked on the farm, saw a different type of dairy farming over there. After that I took a job with the North Carolina

Extension Service. I worked down there for two years, 1977 to 1979. I worked as a cross county or two county dairy extension agent specializing in dairy and forages. After that I went back to Penn State and got a PhD in dairy science emphasizing nutrition, research work primarily in buffers but also how buffers influence rate of passage. I did some studies on rate of passage of feed through the digestive system. Then I worked with Southern States Cooperative for a little over four years in Richmond, Virginia, covering five states, in the last year, six states including North Carolina, which was added to the southern states territory. I did that from 1982 to late 1986.

**Q.** Now you are a dairy nutritionist?

**A.** Yes. Similar job to what I had been with Southern States.

**Q.** What does a dairy nutritionist do?

**A.** I break my time down into a couple of areas. One of them staying abreast of research. Communicating with researchers, communicating with Extension people. Finding out what's happening, what's working, what's not. Taking that information and



Dr. Timothy Snyder

using it two ways. First, taking that information and transferring it to our sales people so that they are kept up to date. One of the challenges is to take technical material and make it available to the laymen. So that's one of the rules to continue to keep our sales force up to date. Also to communicate with farmers with the toll-free numbers and such, deal

directly with farmers. Another area that I use the research information is to formulate feeds and spend a fair amount of time putting into practice the different concepts. Another area is to get out on farms so I get it from both sides. Both from the theoretical and the experimental then from the farm. Also to find out what's working in the area. I also do some work in terms of assisting with lab oversight. Not directly responsible for lab oversight, but as new procedures become available that might give us more information to balance rations or put feeds together. We might implement the new lab procedures so that we can test forages more appropriately, more completely. Also involved in this sharing of information. As the oversight of the computerized total ration program or ration balancing program for developing feeding programs for on-farm use.

**Q.** As you get around the territory, what are some major nutritional deficiencies you are seeing?

**A.** That ties into some of the things that we talked about at the Lancaster Dairy School. The thing that I've been talking about more recently, and in this area, is to

make sure that what we as a nutritionist or as a feed representative are telling the farmer to feed actually gets to the cow. That's one of the areas where you would take all of the information we collected, the best knowledge we could put our hands on, distill it into a feeding program recommendation then hand that piece of paper to the farmer. It is up to the farmer then to make sure that when the cow is supposed to get 40 pounds of corn silage that they are offered at least 40 pounds and probably 45 because some of it might get wasted and some of it might not be used as well. When you say to feed them 16 pounds of a complete feed, that they are getting 16 pounds. That's one of the challenges we find the farmers don't know or they estimate or they think that's what they're feeding or that's what they used to feed the last time they checked years ago. So making sure that the balanced ration is delivered to the cow. Make sure that you are not wasting some, feeding a large round bale and part of it is pulled away. You're feeding hay into the bunk and the cow throws it over her back. You have to count in these factors that 15 percent waste and in fact the cow actually consumes what you predicted. You don't know. It is just one less piece of information that you have in order to fine tune your feeding program.

A couple of thoughts on feeding management. I've broken down, into two areas. One would be more directly to nutrition and the other to feed management. Feed management would involve, to a great degree, the farmers roll in this. The nutritionist, the feed company representative is important in terms of making suggested improvements. But it really gets down to the farmers roll and what he is able to do on the farm as well as making sure he is first delivering enough then making sure they are consuming it and not wasting it. That's one area. Feed sequence and frequency is another area that needs to receive some attention. Feed more frequently to the higher producing cows. Feed in the right sequence if you're feeding individually rather than in a total mixed ration. Feeding the long forage first causes the cow to chew. Then following that with an energy source. Provide energy to the bacteria. Because the cow had already chewed, she has produced buffer and saliva. The energy source when it ferments doesn't depress the pH in the rumen as dramatically. So you kind of moderate the rumen pH by feeding the long forage first. Then feeding the protein concentrate because the bacteria need to have the energy to use the protein. So thinking about the sequence, then feeding that sequence maybe more frequently. If you've only been doing it twice a day, do it three times a day, particularly for the high producers. You see responses on herds also when they take some of those steps.

**Q.** Do you think that the average dairyman, that you see anyway, really is getting all of the production out of his cows that's genetically in them?

**A.** We work with quite a number of good farmers. Pennfield has a very good number of high-producing herds. You may have heard Don Mahlodt mention that. The good farmers are still not reaching the genetic potential of their cows. Even the 20,000 pound herd average, I think the genetic potential is greater than that. We do have a good proportion of people that are doing a good job. There is another group of farmers that Pennfield would like to, I'm sure, were interested in serving or going to increase efforts toward serving the farmers that have the 16,000

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