

BST Effects And Forage Loss Are Topics At Penn Jersey Dairy Expo

BY PAT PURCELL
ALLENTOWN (BERKS CO.)
— Bovine Somatotrophin (BST) can increase milk production per cow per day on an average between 8 and 11 pounds depending upon dosage, according to Dr. David Galligan, of the University of Pennsylvania. Although that is a substantial increase in milk production and would also add sizeable income to the milk check, that apparently is not enough to convince dairy farmers that BST is for their cows.

Galligan spoke to a full house at the Penn-Jersey Dairy Exposition held in Allentown on Wednesday, concerning several studies being conducted on the effects of BST. The effects of BST appeared to be the main concern of the audience. Farmers were quick to question Galligan on its safety, health precautions, consumer concerns and its value to the farmer.

Galligan noted several specifics about BST:

— Certain amounts of BST

are already found in cows without an injection and is also found in their milk.

— Cows treated with BST produce milk which has the same level of BST in it as cows without the injections.

— Somatotrophin is not found in man.

— Somatotrophin is a protein and is digested as any other protein.

According to Galligan's studies, the amount of daily per cow increase in milk production depended upon the dosage administered and also the lactation number for the cow and also whether the cow was injected near day 30 or after day 100 into the lactation cycle.

BST can also have an effect on the lactation curve by increasing the peak milk production and by enabling the animal to level-off at a higher production rate which can have some bearing on culling.

But with the higher levels of milk production is there any effi-

ciency lost in feed intake? Galligan said no.

"We found that the increased dry matter intake was in response to production. A cow producing 90 pounds of milk per day whether she was on BST or not would still consume the same amount of feed. However, the cow with the BST did have a higher efficiency rate. So we were spreading fixed costs over more units of production," explained Galligan.

More study and more data are needed to determine the effects of BST usage on reproduction. His study showed slight increases in reproduction problems with cows on BST, but, according to Galligan, because the differences were so slight a much larger number of cows needed to be studied.

This study did not show any problem with ketosis or any other metabolic diseases. However, there was a significant increase in mastitis with high level doses of BST. But again, more research was needed to determine the effect.

In a separate but related study which simulated several dairy farm operations over a span of six years increases were from \$.27 to \$.64 in profit per cow per day. Also, he noted that the small producer could enjoy the same marginal increase as the larger producer.

BST use would enable the farmer to produce the same milk with fewer cows; more milk with same number of cows and also to keep cull cows longer. Galligan noted that more research needs to be conducted on the health and reproductive effects. Also, according to Dr. Lumin Kung of the University of Delaware, within the next six months the Eastern European Community will approve the use of BST. Galligan predicts that BST will be accepted in the United States in the early 1990's, but said the adoption rate by farmers was not so easy to predict.

Snake Oil and Foo Foo Dust

"There are too many products on the market labeled as forage preservatives and too little

research that has been done. Beware! There's a lot of snake oil and foo-foo dust out there. You've got to do your homework," stated Dr. Lumin Kung, University of Delaware.

There is no way to prevent forage loss, but it can be discouraged with the proper use of good products. The key is finding the right product and implementing good management procedures. Forage preservatives can help reduce loss if crop is harvested at the proper stage of maturity, is chopped at 1/4" to 3/8" and is stored in an air tight silo.

"The number one priority is to fill the silo rapidly and continuously. This is number 1. Seal the silo immediately. If you are tired and have one last wagon to put in, do it. Otherwise when come out in the morning to do it, it will have already begun to deteriorate," said Kung.

Time of harvesting is crucial. Each day that forage is not harvested after bud stage equals 1 lb. of milk production per cow per day loss.

Also, hay drying agents in this area are necessary simply because

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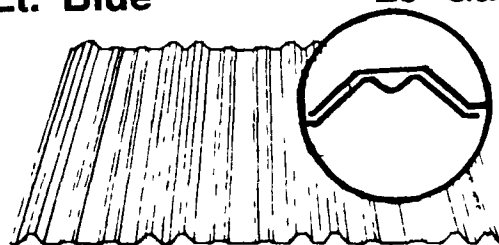
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