



Dairy Tips By Dr. Randy Lyle, Ph.D.

Purina Mills Dairy Consultant

WHAT ARE THE NUTRIENT REQUIREMENTS OF COWS?

by Dr. Randy Lyle

A dairyman recently asked me "why can't feed companies or universities agree on what to feed my cows?" His sincere tone revealed a serious desire to understand why there are so many different opinions on how and what to feed cows.

I explained that there are no universally accepted nutrient requirements for lactating cows, nor are there absolute values that quantitate the nutritional value of feedstuffs. Even though the NRC (National Research Council) has published nutrient recommendations for all types of livestock, these values still must be used as **GUIDELINES**, not as **ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENTS**. Furthermore, feed companies, such as Purina Mills, have researched nutrient requirements of cows for years, and have established their

own set of nutrient requirements, which may be quite different from those used by others.

The same applies to the nutritional value of feedstuffs. There are no universally accepted values. Although the NRC APPROXIMATES the nutritional value of feedstuffs for cows, these values are **NOT ABSOLUTE**. Purina Mills has been measuring nutritional values of feedstuffs for cows since 1925, and has its own extensive data base. This information is obviously not shared within the industry, and our values may differ from those used by others.

Why isn't there agreement on what to feed cows? Because universal nutrient requirements of cows, and universal nutrient content of feedstuffs, do not exist! Therein lies the reason for disagreement.

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