

GLENN'S UDDERINGS

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grain feeding rates about 1-2 pounds per day, being careful not to throw cows off feed. While attempting to do this, remember forages are foremost when it comes to keeping the rumen normal and feed intakes high. It is essential that cows always consume adequate amounts of forage. Never sacrifice forage intake for the purpose of getting more grain into cows; it can cause an acid rumen.

Forages should make up at least 40 - 50-percent of total ration dry matter, and cows should consume a minimum of about 1.8 pounds of forage dry matter per 100 pounds of body weight. The goal is to feed a properly-balanced, nutrient dense ration to maximize nutrient intake, while also maintaining maximum dry matter intake and normal rumen function.

In the days preceding and following calving, it may be beneficial to feed some cows a "stress pack," some buffers, yeast, probiotics, niacin, etc. To increase energy intake, consider feeding some fat. Work closely with your nutritionist on these matters, and try to make sure they are cost effective.

Normally, we think of feeding cows according to milk production. With today's high producing cattle, we may need to change our feeding strategies of the past. Perhaps we shouldn't even be thinking about feeding for milk production in early lactation.

Maybe we need to simply concentrate on maximizing dry matter and nutrient intake until cows are back to proper working flesh, which is a body score of about 3.0. Once this is accomplished, then we can revert to feeding according to milk production.

4. High Quality Forages. It is hard to make a lot of milk without high quality forages. Generally, forages are not thought of as an energy feed, but high quality forages are a major and valuable source of energy and other nutrients for cows, and they are more digestible.

Because they are more digestible, they move out of the rumen more rapidly, making room for the consumption of more feed, all of which increases dry matter and nutrient intakes. That is why good appetites, good quality feeds and a functional rumen are so important before and after calving.

5. Effective Fiber. A well-functioning rumen needs a certain amount of fiber. A good portion of

this fiber has to come from forages, and the fiber has to be digestible and effective.

As forages mature, the digestibility of fiber decreases. On the other hand, the fiber in immature high protein alfalfa is so digestible that it has lost some of its effectiveness, or its ability to stimulate cud chewing activity.

The effectiveness of fiber is also reduced when forages and other feeds are ensiled or chopped finely. The action of unloaders, augers and mixers also can reduce particle size of feeds before they get to the cow. When this happens, it may be necessary to increase forage feeding rates in order to maintain adequate intake of effective fiber, which is needed for normal rumen function.

For the fiber in silages to be effective, at least 20-percent of the particles should be over 1.5 inches in length. Another alternative is to feed at least 5 pounds of a forage that has particle lengths of 1.5 inches or greater.

6. Balanced Rations and Feed Processing. Digestibility of feeds and nutrient absorption are improved greatly by feeding a balanced ration. Work closely with your nutritionist.

The goal is to get as many nutrients as possible absorbed into the blood stream, not to let them end

up in the gutter.

Process hard grains finely enough for them to be digested. For a softer, more digestible grain in corn silage, harvest the crop when the milk line is at about the midpoint of the kernel, and choose hybrids whose ears do not dry down too far in advance of the stalk.

Avoid overheating of silages and grains as it can bind protein. 7. Blended Rations and Feeding Practices. Blending feeds or the use of a total mixed ration (TMR) can help keep cows' rumens more stable and more normal. This can improve feed intake, rumen activity, and overall efficiency of digestion.

If grains and concentrates are fed separately avoid slug feedings; limit grain feeding to a maximum of about 5-7 pounds per feeding, and try feeding cows some forages before feeding them grain.

8. Formulate Rations, Based on Cows' Actual Feed Intakes, and Weigh and Test Feeds. When formulating rations, don't overestimate how much your cows are consuming; it's better to underestimate their intakes. If you overestimate intakes, the nutrient density of the ration will be less than what it should be.

The same thing happens when you simply mix a ration for fewer cows than what you are actually feeding. That's opposite of what the cows need; if intake is less, the density of the ration needs to be greater — not less — so cows consume the nutrients they need.

Weigh feeds fed and feeds refused so you can get a more accurate estimate of intakes. Test ensiled feeds weekly for moisture content and adjust rations accordingly. This is very important! Also check accuracy of scales and weigh cells on mixers, and test the TMR mix to verify the accuracy of mixing.

9. Access to Feed and Water, and Bunk Management. Be sure cows have easy access to feed 20-24 hours a day, with plenty of good quality water no further than about 50 feet away.

Cows can't consume feed and make milk on an empty feed bunk! Keep the feed fresh, and to stimulate intake, push it up to the cows or feed them several times a day.

Feed cows about 5-percent more feed than they will clean up, and use the manger sweepings to feed lower producers, dry cows or heifers.

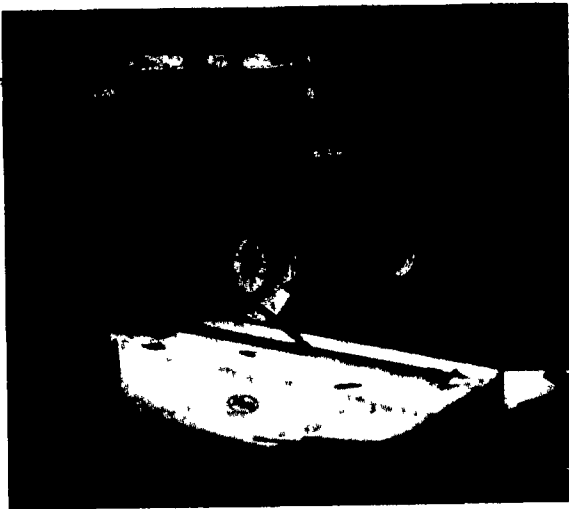
Provide about 2 feet of bunk space per cow and clean the bunk frequently.

10. Healthy, Stress-Free Cows. Healthy cows have better appetites and produce more milk than those that are stressed from such things as fatty livers, difficult

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