



dhia

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QUESTION: We track MUN on a monthly basis and have been very successful at maintaining a 12-13 mg/dl average. Suddenly on our September test MUN dropped to less than 9. What factors could contribute to this?

ANSWER: Fall feeding and new crops being made make this a very common scenario. Most producers that test MUN monthly see the correlation between constant MUN values and their success in maintaining a constant diet fed to their cows.

There are a few things that can happen within the cow's diet that

can soil the plan. One is so simple that we often overlook it. Moisture changes within the forage part of the diet can change more than the dry matter intake. Make sure diets get adjusted for this change but also consider this thought: typical Pennsylvania forage is some sort of hay crop silage.

There is tremendous variation in moisture levels as hay crop is ensiled in trenches, tower silos, bags, and wraps.

Typical protein tests can be very similar regardless moisture but often the soluble or degradable protein changes with moisture content.

Moisture levels lower than 50 percent and those higher than 60 percent, even though crude protein remains the same, can be quite different in what rumen bugs have available to them.

As a rule of thumb, when moisture levels decrease the soluble or degradable portions also decrease. Very wet forages also show higher soluble or degradable portions.

The farm was advised to look at changes in this part of the diet and indeed haylage has dropped from 65 percent 50 percent moisture as feed from their bunk. Soluble protein levels on the wetter feed were 64 percent and on the drier feed, 56 percent.

This change resulted in less available protein for use by rumen bugs, less milk produced, and MUN values were drastically reduced.

Sometimes changes occur in our cows and we can only react to them.

This dietary change was not planned but nevertheless had a large impact on the cows. We can use this to build a plan for the

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future that allows us to anticipate performance changes that are triggered by feed changes.

Simply put, if I had haylage that remains top quality, but changes occur in the protein fractions and moisture content, I would do what is necessary to head off performance changes in the cows.

MUN in this instance not only gave us a diagnostic tool for today's production, but we have found that by knowing what drives MUN in the diet can help us ward off potential negative trends in production.

Don't be satisfied with acceptable MUN values but instead use constant testing and relate MUN with diet changes. By doing so, I believe the 4-pound loss on 260 cows for an undetermined length of time could be avoided.

Isn't the risk of losing \$150 daily worth testing for and learning to use MUN? I think it is.

Use the tools available along with your farm advisors, to help avoid a potential loss.

Better yet, develop an aggressive attitude toward DHIA records and force yourself to act and not just react.

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DHIA County Banquets

Date	County	Place & Time
November 7	Bucks	St. Matthew's Lutheran Church 6:30pm
November 10	Bedford	Everett High School 7 pm
November 12	Bradford	Bonanza, Wysox 7:45 pm
November 12	Cumberland	Pentownship Fire Hall, Huntsdale 7pm
November 12	Centre	Logan Grange, Pleasant Gap 7 pm
November 13	Clarion/Venango	Wolfs Den, Knox 7:30 pm
November 14	Susquehanna	Fairdale Grange noon
November 14	Lackawanna	Green Grove Grange 7:45 pm
November 16	Somerset	Berlin Community Building 7 pm
November 19	York	Thomasville Fire Company 7 pm
November 19	Lycoming	Hoss's, Williamsport 7 pm
November 20	Tioga	Edgewoods, Mansfield 7:30 pm
November 20	Northampton	Blue Valley Farm Show 7pm
November 20	Snyder	Middleburg Fire Hall 7 pm
November 20	Clearfield/Jefferson	
November 23	Franklin	Gibbles Restaurant, Greencastle 7 pm
December 3	Beaver	Extension office 7:30 pm
December 8	Berks	Ag Service Center noon
December 10	Adams	York Springs Fire Hall 7pm
January 7	Mercer	Mercer Co. Extension Bldg 11:30 am
January 7	Schuylkill	Dairy Days
January 16	Dauphin	County Buffet on R 22
January ???	Indiana	In conjunction with Genex

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