Average Farm Feed Costs For Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's last week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania.

Remember, these are averages, so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

Corn, No.2y — 2.35 bu., 4.21 cwt.

Wheat, No. 2 — 2.35 bu., 3.93 cwt.

Barley, No. 3 — 1.60 bu., 3.42 cwt.

Oats, No. 2 — 1.49 bu., 4.65 cwt.

Soybeans, No. 1 — 4.38 bu., 7.31 cwt.

Ear Corn — 76.10 ton, 3.81 cwt.

Alfalfa Hay — 148.00 ton, 7.4 cwt.

Mixed Hay — 132.50 ton, 6.63 cwt.

Timothy Hay — 136.00 ton, 6.8 cwt.

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Dairyman To Dairyman

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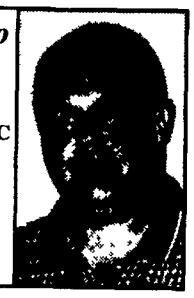

Question: Our milk average dropped severely when we started a new high moisture corn last month and we cannot turn it around. Is there something you could suggest to help us?

The DHIA reports told the same story as the dairyman — production was off by close to 20 pounds.

Herd summary II shows that the herd normally drops from the May and June highs during this time of year. This year's drop was more severe. Past records indicate that the cows should be milking 50 to 55 pounds although the dairyman would like 60 to 65 pounds, similar to production in early summer.

Casual observations were made as we toured the barn. The cows were in very good condition and many were standing while chewing their cud. Air quality was decent. Cow comfort was above average as noted by blemishes on hocks, and several cows were able to get up easily.

One thing that bothered me was, upon watching several cows drop manure, the large amounts of yellow corn specks that were seen. When we looked at the high moisture corn it was apparent that this was the source of the specks. The new corn was put in very dry and had little fermented smell. It had been processed by a roller mill after coming out of the silo and contained a fair amount of cob, which was retained by the combine. The first change we discussed was to tighten down the rolls as much as possible so the corn would become feed instead of manure fortifier. This physical change should make more feed available for milk.

Next, we looked at the MUN report. The average was 11.1mg/dl. This is in the middle of the acceptable range and could be easily overlooked as being OK. I like to look further at this report and see what makes that average. A potential problem was noted in that most cows in early lactation made up the lowest MUN values that were part of that average. We also saw that the very highest MUN value was 14.2mg/dl. Sometimes in low producing cows, we have this very narrow MUN range. During early lactation, it is rare to not have any cows with MUN values at 16 to 20 mg/dl. The question was raised about adequate protein in early lactation cows. We looked at other parameters dealing with this question and saw that cows were not peaking at all. Herd summary II showed 41 days to peak. In other words, the first test day is the highest and then it goes down from there. Again, we think of protein in early lactation. The nutritionist will be asked about increasing the ratio of degradable protein to carbohydrates especially in those early cows.

We then talked about the feed with emphasis on the forage portion. The family is aware of the low quality of the haylage that is currently being fed and we talked about plans to help overcome this problem. Substituting a small quantity of good forage for poor will pay big dividends.

Time will tell if we have been successful at raising production. It is essential to remember that we used DHIA records in several capacities. Number one, we looked at past performance to set *realistic goals. Number two, we got past blaming the* feed man and moved onto solving the problem. Number three, we pinpointed some areas of concern in our feeding program. Number four, the best approach at problem solving is level thinking by all members of the team.

Will we get to the 60-pound average of a few months ago? Can we make some low cost changes to increase production? I feel certain that we can and I believe the best way to reach higher production goals is to plan now to eliminate the factors leading to low production. We need to address the physical form of the corn first. Next, we need to balance the rumen available protein with the carbohydrates especially for the early lactation cows. Lastly we need to be patient until we rid the ration of the poor quality forage.

You can see that feeding cows is a balancing act — balancing suitable physical characteristics of the ingredients, the chemical properties of the diet, and most importantly, balancing our expectations and potential. This may prove to be the most challenging.

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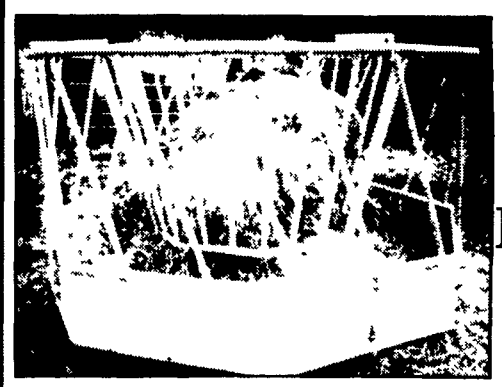

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