

Dairyman To Dairyman

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Question: What can we do to prevent separation of grain and forage in our TMR? If we do nothing, will our cows perform as they should?

Certain feeding situations make this a very good question. A TMR made up of dry hay and grain is the extreme example of two ingredients that are so different in physical nature that maintaining a homogeneous blend of feed is almost impossible without using some sort of binding agent like molasses, liquid fat, wet by-products like brewers, or even water.

I made a visit to this farm because only experience can determine whether separation of feeds as seen by the dairyman is a legitimate concern. Before arriving, I had requested that a sample of feed be kept as it was discharged from the mixer. I arrived at the tail end of the feeding period with feed left over from the morning feeding.

The amount looked to be adequate and the feeder reported that total leftovers for the day were a bit less than what I saw at the end of the daytime feed period. I advised them that feeding for an 8% refusal was important and that this should be checked periodically with the scales on the wagon so that the eyeball method can be a bit more accurate.

Comparing the mixed feed with the refusal, it was apparent that indeed the cows were sort-

ing. The most accurate way to measure the severity of the separation is to lab analyze both of the samples. Another way to tell if some feed management changes are in order is to look at the performance of the cows since starting this particular diet.

Milk pounds have risen steadily since the TMR ration was fed (54 to 58.5). Butterfat percent has remained identical (3.8%), which tells me that rumen health has not been compromised. Percent protein has gone up slightly but still looks normal for Holsteins (3.2 to 3.3%). MUN has gone down to 10 from 13 and indicates that the balance of carbohydrates to protein has increased.

My recommendation in this case is to monitor the above measurements and if no major change occurs, do not change anything. The cows have told us through DHIA information that although they are sorting and thereby not eating the diet prepared for them; they are able to perform well.

The dairyman asked about the addition of water to help keep the feed together and I said that cheap ideas are often the most underestimated. I also suggested that adding liquid molasses would be the most to my liking but he should work with his nutritionists to look at all his options. If molasses were to be added then the other carbohydrate sources should be adjusted because of what we saw already in MUN.

The real concept here is to not just be satisfied with good rations on paper, but more importantly, make sure that you know what your cows are really eating. Let Pa. DHIA records tell you about your cows and if you cannot hear what they are saying, maybe I can help.

Beef Demand Up For Seventh Consecutive Quarter

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — With seven straight quarters of increased beef demand under its belt, the U.S. beef industry has an aggressive long-range plan to keep demand and profitability growing, said Chuck Schroeder, chief executive officer for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

"Year-end beef demand for 2000 is about 3.6 percent higher than 1999 levels," Schroeder said today from the 2001 Cattle and Beef Industry Convention and Trade Show. "Today, the beef industry is one of the most dynamic segments of the U.S. agricultural economy, and we're just getting started. We've set an aggressive goal to boost demand another 6 percent through 2004."

Planning and Focus

Schroeder explained that the industry's ability to stabilize consumer demand for beef was the result of diligent planning, persistence and focus.

"We began laying the ground work in the mid 1980s by emphasizing improvements in product consistency, tenderness and overall quality; new product development; enhanced relationships with channel marketing partners; multiple beef safety intervention measures; the opening of export markets; and research into beef's nutritional values and benefits," Schroeder explained.

"These efforts began to pay off in 1999, when the beef industry saw consumer demand for beef increase for the first time in nearly two decades."

Increased consumer spending and per capita beef consumption have contributed greatly to the health of the U.S. beef industry. According to Cattle-Fax, a private market research firm, consumer expenditures for beef topped \$52 billion in 2000 the first time ever annual spending will exceed \$50 billion. Yearly per capita consumption of beef is projected to reach 66.2 pounds,

while per capita consumption for pork and chicken totaled roughly 50.5 and 55.8 pounds, respectively.

These gains are happening at a time when beef supplies are record high, which usually sends prices lower to compensate for market saturation. In the beef industry's case, average retail prices have actually increased (up about 15 cents per pound compared to 1999 prices), signaling a true turn-around in consumer demand.

"We've worked hard to deliver added value to the consumer, and when consumers are consistently seeing that value, price becomes less of a factor in the purchase decision," Schroeder said.

While not discounting the impact of the U.S. economy in recent years, Schroeder believes one of the greatest drivers of change for the industry was the formation of a long-range plan that focused all industry segments on a single goal stabilizing consumer beef demand.

Market Demands

"Historically, it's been difficult for the beef industry to keep up with demands of the marketplace," said Schroeder, who celebrates his five-year anniversary as NCBA CEO this month.

"To turn the tides, we had to leave traditional business practices behind and create a visionary plan that all segments of the industry could get behind one that helped us compete in a new economy ruled by consumer spending power and brand appeal."

In addition to increased communication and cooperation among industry segments, the industry's long-range plan focused on:

- The introduction of convenient beef products that meet the needs of busy consumers
- A science-based effort to increase awareness of essential nutrients in beef — like zinc, iron, protein and many B-vitamins — and the benefits those nutrients provide
- Expanding the export market for U.S. beef products

Three years ago, through the use of checkoff dollars, NCBA helped promote a new category of fully cooked beef roasts, steaks and other entrees that could be heated in the microwave and ready to serve in about 10 minutes. Since then, sales of these types of products have increased 41.4 percent, and annual sales for the new category topped \$84 million as of December 2000.2 The beef checkoff also addressed beef's market share in the value-added fresh category, deli category, frozen meal kits containing beef and value-added products for the foodservice channel.

Nutrition Effort

In 1999, the industry launched a major checkoff-funded marketing effort to boost consumer awareness of beef's unique nutrient bundle. It also publicized new research that found lean beef and chicken had similar effects in lowering blood cholesterol levels when included in a heart-healthy diet.

A recent consumer attitudes study of more than 1,300 adults found Americans were more likely to say they feel better about beef's nutritional value today (35 percent) than they did a year ago (25 percent). Fifty-four percent of Americans agree beef is an important part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle, compared with 51 percent in 1999.3

Total beef exports through September 2000 were up 12.6 percent in volume and 17.6 percent in value, compared to the same time last year. The beef export market is expected to grow roughly 50 percent over the next five years, from 1,218,000 metric tons in 2000 to 1,817,000 metric tons in 2006. China is expected to join Japan, Mexico, Canada and the Republic of South Korea as a key trade partner once it joins the World Trade Organization, which is anticipated to happen by mid-2001.

"There is cooperation across business segments in the beef industry like never before," Schroeder added.

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