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W-S FEED & SUPPLIES LIMITED

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FEEDING DRY COWS FOR RESULTS

The management and feeding of dry cows is sometimes a "neglected" aspect of dairy farming. However, it is essentially the first step in reaching for profitable peak milk production. An increased emphasis on proper nutrition and condition of dry cows will yield big dividends at calving and into early lactation. Producers who blend cow-sense with attention to dry cow needs recognize the benefits. Good dry cow care starts in late lactation. If cows are thin going into late lactation, they should be fed accordingly prior to drying off. The tendency to wait until dry-off to "condition" cows often leads to over feeding; late lactating cows use energy more efficiently for body gain than dry cows. Cows that are thin or in poor condition at the start of the dry period, can tempt the dairy producers to feed "a little more"… at the wrong time! Feeding excess energy at the start of a typical dry period can lead to accumulation of fat in the liver. It is becoming more apparent that highly productive cows can have more of a tendency to develop fatty livers. Continued overfeeding during the dry period will accelerate liver fat levels. This, in turn, can lead to severe problems after calving.

During early lactation cows typically do not consume sufficient energy to meet production needs, creating a negative energy balance. This is normal up to a point. Cows mobilize body fat that is processed by the liver for eventual transfer to the udder. Mammary tissue converts some of the fatty acids coming from the liver into milk fat. Fatty livers interfere with this process and become inefficient at converting mobilized body fat (triglycerides) into the form that the udder can use. Research has shown that the fatty (faulty) liver problem leads to a buildup of triglycerides in the blood, which lowers appetite and reduces feed intakes even further. This condition can then lead to ketosis, a more familiar term and problem to dairy producers. The highest incidence of ketosis coincides with the period of the most severe negative energy balance. Typically there is further weight loss. Cows with ketosis may at first refuse grain and later even refuse silage/hay. Other conditions associated with fatty liver are retained placentas, uterine infections, digestive disorders and impaired reproduction. This illustrates the critical relationship between dry cow nutrition and fresh cow health.

The best approach to help reduce the risk of fresh cow problems is to have cows enter the dry period with adequate body condition. It is generally considered best not to alter body condition during the dry cow period, and to avoid extremes in either too little or too much feed energy. On a scale of 1 (thin) to 5 (fat), cows should score about 3.0-3.5 in body condition during the dry period. Tracking body condition scores may be beneficial during this time in the lactation cycle and throughout the dry and transition period.

A well-managed dry cow program may be one of the best investments you can make in your dairy herd, impacting herd health, reproduction, persistency, productivity and profitability.

We can assist you in reviewing your dry and transition cow management and feeding program, to help optimize their lactation cycle and your bottom line. Call today!

CALF MILK REPLACER

Receive a FREE CALF COAT when you order a skid of calf milk replacer in October.

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We will be closed MONDAY OCTOBER 9, 2016 for Thanks-giving. Please order your feed accordingly.

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WATCH OUT FOR SILO GAS

Silo gas forms as newly stored silage ferments. It can cause serious injuries, severe respiratory distress, permanent lung damage, and even death. In late summer and early fall, when silos are being filled, the danger is at its peak. Corn forms more silo gas than other crops. Silo gas begins to form immediately after forage is put into a silo. This gas includes nitrogen oxide, which changes to nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in the presence of oxygen. Nitrogen dioxide, not to be confused with nitrous oxide or "laughing gas", is a highly corrosive, toxic gas, which forms nitric acid when mixed with water. It is heavier than air and displaces oxygen. Silo gas also contains carbon dioxide, which is not toxic, but is [also] heavier than air and displaces oxygen. When inhaled, the nitrogen dioxide in silo gas mixes with the moisture in the body, forming nitric acid. This causes severe burning and scarrring in the lungs and other parts of the respiratory system. Since it is heavier than air, silo gas will settle on the surface of the silage and flow down silo chutes.

Individuals exposed to silo gas may collapse and die from the gas and lack of oxygen. They may go into respiratory distress, fall down the silo/silo chute or even receive respiratory burns. Symptoms may/may not be evident immediately. Anyone who has been exposed to (or potentially exposed to) silo gas should get fresh air immediately and see a doctor, even if they feel 'better' after getting some fresh air. Prevention is critical to begin with, but proactive care is also essential. To prevent silo gas exposure, the following steps are recommended:

1. Stay out of the silo for 2-3 weeks after filling. This is the peak period of silo gas formation. Keep the silo room closed off from the rest of the barn, and ventilate it to remove any gas that may flow down the chute.
2. Before entering a silo for the first time, run the forage blower for 30 minutes, and leave it running while inside. Also, ventilate the chute and silo room. Always have someone else with you outside the silo to go for help if needed.
3. If you must enter a silo to level off or set up an unloader after filling, do so immediately after the last load is in. Do not wait until after supper or the next day. Run the blower while you are inside.
4. Be aware that the forage blower air may not adequately ventilate a partly filled silo, since silo gas settles down on the surface. Leave silo doors open to allow gas to escape, but be sure to close off and ventilate the silo room.
5. Invest in portable gas monitors to test for nitrogen dioxide and oxygen levels. This is the only way to be certain the atmosphere is safe to enter. *(Edited from an article by M. Rankin, U of WI Extension)*

TOP 10 REASONS TO DEWORM YOUR HERD

An important task on any dairy farm is maintaining herd health. That's why parasite control should rank high on your priority list. Here are 10 ways a parasite control strategy can help lead to a healthier future for your herd. Fall is an ideal time to pursue this opportunity:

It starts with immunity. It's hard to recognize the immune status of cattle just by sight, but better immunity means healthier animals. Healthy cattle have a great…

Appetite. Imagine a stomach full of worms… GONE! What a relief! Happy, hungry cattle eat more freely and have better…

Feed efficiency. Fewer worms in the lining of the abomasum and intestine mean that these organs ultimately can function better. The easier it is to transfer nutrients from the feed to the animal, the easier it is to...

Improve weight gain. Weight gain dictates a lot of the normal immune, metabolic and reproductive processes in the bovine body. If a replacement heifer gains weight easily, this can lead to…

Earlier breeding. According to Cornell University, the benchmark age to reach breeding weight should be younger than 15 months. If not, you suffer the double penalty of extra rearing costs and decreased lifetime production. Avoid the double whammy. Start to…

Milk early. The sooner a heifer has her first calf, the sooner she is no longer a 'feed bill liability', but rather an asset making...

More milk. It is estimated that she will give 1,775 lbs. *more* milk on her first lactation if she weighs more than 1,250 lbs. after her first calving. This can result in…

Fewer culls resulting from late calvers. This will help save on culling costs/replacement expenses. If a first-calf heifer calves late, she becomes an annual target to cull, as she will always have difficulty getting ahead of the curve. Staying ahead requires…

Weight stabilization. It takes a lot of energy and resources in the form of feed and animal tissue to produce the milk quantities we demand of today's dairy herds. Cattle must stabilize their weight to support efforts to cycle and settle a pregnancy. Parasitism can delay this process and rob your ability to...

Maximize profits. Improve breeding efficiency in the herd by decreasing feed input costs and improving weight gains (due to better feed efficiency). This is ideal for your replacement heifers and other cattle.

(Edited from Dairy Herd Management – Dr. T Moravec)