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 over-feeding 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.

I 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!

The Benefits of Crop Rotation

Crop rotation can benefit your farm in many ways. An effective crop rotation can help to meet the feed needs of the operation, improve crop yields, reduce pest problems, and effectively use on-farm nutrients. Because the resources and needs of dairy farms differ, the best crop rotations can also vary. As farms expand, and forage and nutrient management requirements change, crop rotations can be refined and improved. Many factors influence crop rotations, making planning both necessary and complex. A well-functioning crop rotation should do the following:

- Meet the feed needs of the operation
- Grow crops adapted to the soils and climate
- Match the labor availability of the operation
- Minimize the use of pesticides
- Effectively use nutrients from manure
- Minimize soil erosion

When developing or modifying a crop rotation to meet some of your goals and resource limitations on a particular operation, consider the following steps:

1. Estimate feed requirements
2. Estimate production
3. Adjust the ration if necessary
4. Match crops to soils
5. Determine what rotations work best
6. Be flexible
7. Consider no-till as an option

PLAN FOR SPRING 2014

Ask Me for Details

W-S FEED… *planting quality!*

Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call us today. Our goal and commitment is to help you!

VOLUME 3 – Number 11 – November 2013

THE TEAM FOR RESULTS

SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Ventilation & Cold Weather

Ventilation and air exchange serve an important function in livestock housing, maintaining a comfortable environment for your animals. Typically, a mature dairy cow will breathe out 4-5 gallons of water/day as water vapor and produce 2000-2400 BTU/hr (600-700 Watts) of heat. Good ventilation will help to remove heat, moisture and odors created by livestock. It replaces this with drier, cooler outside air. Adequate air exchange also removes gases such as ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and methane, which can be harmful to the health of both “man and beast!” Ventilation needs will vary with seasons and climatic conditions. During winter months this can be a real challenge. Keep facilities adequately ventilated and watch your cows perform. It can make a positive difference!

YOUNG STOCK & COLD!

Cold weather can play havoc on young stock, impacting their growth and development, as well as health – and possibly delaying maturity beyond first calving at 24 months of age. It is important to consider all aspects of heifer care and management, including housing, ventilation, hygiene, and feeding a quality, energy-balanced milk replacer and starter feed – products that can help ensure they receive adequate energy and nutrients to meet the needs of growth, development and bodily warmth. During fall and winter weather, it is necessary to feed more energy to calves, in order to meet higher energy needs for maintenance. Once the temperature drops below 59°F/15°C, the calf has to increase its metabolism in order to maintain its body temperature. A calf housed at a temperature of 25°F/-4°C requires about 30% more energy for maintenance than one housed at 50°F/10°C. In extremely cold weather (<0°F/-18°C), sick calves are at great risk due to potentially reduced feed and energy intake, coupled with limited body reserves of energy. To maximize the growth of calves, it is important to supplement nutrient intake during cold weather, thereby increasing the animal’s ability to generate and maintain its body heat. To ensure your calves are getting enough milk replacer and starter feed on cold, damp days, and to review your entire calf program, call me today! Together we can make a difference. Keep calves warm this fall and winter, and appreciate the difference in their growth and development.

RENAISSANCE NUTRITION

W-S FEED & SUPPLIES LIMITED

W-S Feed & Supplies, Ltd.
1805 Sawmill Road
Conestogo, ON N0B 1N0
Canada
www.wsfeeds.ca

Taking service to another level