

4 practical ways to Get More Milk

We are always looking to get more milk and make a profit. At the same time, we need to keep the cows healthy-no profit if they're sick. There's been some really good research done lately that helps get more milk, without breaking the bank-take a look at these:

Selecting Next Year's Forage

I really don't know if your particular soil is sandy or clay or if it is well-drained or not, so instead, I'm going to focus on the nutrient content of the plants-coming from the standpoint of the cow, of course.

The more of her ration a cow can eat in a day, the more milk she produces. In fact, the thumb rule is that for every 1 pound of feed (11.8 cents on average), she will produce 2 pounds of milk (34 cents on average). Quite a return on investment! How then, can we get her to eat more? Forage quality is the start of it all.

The higher the uNDFom (lignified fiber) is in the feed, the more this fills up the rumen and slows down passage rate. Too slow of a passage rate and she will eat less feed in a day and that equals less milk. The feed can create too high of a passage rate, but right now let's focus on the immediate issue-slow passage rate.

Rumen fill caused by slow passage rates are the result of too much lignified fiber. As a producer, you can cut forages at an earlier maturity to reduce the stemminess-but that doesn't always work out the way it was planned.



However, you can select forage sources that contain less uNDFom as a genetic trait or longer maturities so that there is more time before the plant gets too stemmy. You should know that most seed trials to compare varieties don't always use lignin or uNDFom (yet) as markers. For alfalfa and grasses, look for high RFQ (+150) and high NDFD 30 (50-70). For corn silage, it's a little trickier. A lot of seed companies rate traits instead of using the typical formulas. Go for the highest fiber digestibility that works for your soil type. Hedge your bets this year and get the most out of your feed.

Controlling Inflammation

When a cow freshens, she almost always has some inflammation. No surprise there, right? She goes from the easy life in the dry cow pen to having to work every day.

Most of the time, we don't even notice any inflammation unless she doesn't clean or if she gets metritis. But it's there.

Increasing peak by the numbers....

Peak milk is critical to overall performance during her lactation and getting the cows off to a great start is critical.

250 pounds of milk is what a cow will gain over a lactation for every 1 pound increase in peak milk.

90-100 square feet is the optimal space a dry cow needs. Overcrowding can cause metabolic issues.

30-36 inches of bunk space is what a dry cow needs for optimal dry matter intake. About 80% stocking of a normal pen.

28-32 pounds of dry matter is what a dry cow should consume per day. Less or more can cause problems.

21 days prior to freshening is the amount of time a cow should be in a transition pen. 14 days for steam up in tie stalls.

14-21 days after freshening is the average time a cow should spend in a fresh pen.

10-15 gallons of warm water should be given to a cow right after freshening. The water works therapeutically and helps dehydration after fluid loss during freshening.

5-10 pounds of hay fed to a fresh cow up to 7 days after freshening. If possible, fill the rumen with some long hay until she is consuming her the rest of her feed well.

Odds & Ends.....

Prices heard this week:

Corn: \$2.84-3.09 per bu.

Soybeans: \$9.45-9.55 per bu.

150 RFV Hay: Large squares are worth approx. .94 per point of RFV.

Springers: \$1100-1600 med grade

Cull cows: \$0.50-0.62 per pound

Bull calves: \$65-135

Connections:

Call us at 1-800-700-9334 or email us at mctech@centurytel.net to get connected

* For sale: Springers, nice group, ready to go.

* For sale: Short bred heifers

* For sale: Dairy quality hay, net wrapped

* For sale: Corn stalk bales

* For sale: 16 ft 5th wheel trailer, newer tires

* For sale: WIC 32 bushel feed cart, Honda gas motor.

* For sale: Katolight KW25 alternator on trailer, 540 PTO

* For sale: J.D. 145 tractor loader, off 2240 tractor, excellent condition, 5 ft bucket.

If you have something to sell or are looking for something-don't hesitate to call or email.

There is no charge for the posting.



If common sense was lard, most folks wouldn't be able to grease a pan-Southern talk

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We know there are some negative effects on people with chronic inflammation, so do cows have an issue with inflammation? Some researchers have been working to find this out.

In recent studies, researchers used NSAIDs (aspirin) to control inflammation before and after calving and found a 7-10% increase in milk, about 3-5 pounds. (Kansas State, 2015). This study has now been replicated and waiting for FDA approval before using aspirin as a part of prefresh and fresh cow protocols.

The real advantages, however, appear to be on the health side of things-even more than milk. New studies are showing that reducing inflammation around calving helps lower the incidence of ketosis, lowers SCC and helps cows to settle after first service. Just like in people, controlling inflammation may help immunity.

For now, using aspirin isn't approved by the FDA. However, there are products that control inflammation prior to and after freshening.

First of all, there are omega fatty acids. Omega fatty acids are medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs) like fish oil. People use fish oil to reduce inflammation-and it seems to have the same positive effects on cows. Products like Strata-G contain MCFAs and are fed before and after calving to reduce inflammation.

Next, there are the yeast cell wall products. Nutritek and Cellmanax have vitamin B complexes and other properties that reduce inflammation prior to and just after calving.

These products and others like them are now available-and more coming in light of this new research.

Figuring out Cow behavior

Honestly, the cows should be eating, drinking, lying down, ruminating or being milked-those behaviors are what we'd like, the goal.

To get them to do that, we need to work with their natural behavior.

Here are some natural behaviors to consider:

1. Cows eat a big part of their feed at night.

We knew that they did that in the summer, but this time of year? Turns out, that after several studies, we've found that they eat a lot at night-whether the lights are on or not. Remember 1 pound of intake equals 2 pounds of milk...feed them so they have plenty to eat at night. An empty bunk or manger in the morning is a lost opportunity to gain more milk.

2. Cows like the same spot in the feed bunk each time they eat.

In the same studies, they've documented cows that will wait for another cow to get out of her spot-even if there is another spot open further down the bunk. Similarly, if there is feed on one end of the bunk and not on her end, she will not go and eat it-unless she is really desperate. As producers, make sure all the spots along the manger/bunk have plenty of feed-especially if you're overcrowded. To often, there is plenty of feed in the middle of the bunk and it's pretty light on the ends.

3. The "herd" likes to eat all at the same time.

Makes sense, herds do things together. In fact, the cows will start to mimic each other. They like to eat, drink and lay down at about the same time and according to their pecking order.

Cows that eat at the same time have higher intake levels. Have feed waiting for them when they come in from outside or back from milking, so they can eat at the same time.

THE BUZZ...

Here are some of the latest things going on out there and our personal opinions of them.

Distillers:

I don't know if you've noticed yet or not, but distillers prices have really dropped. By more than 40%.

We could discuss the reasons for this and weigh the pros and cons, but really, with the cost per pound of protein about half the cost of soy, it's time to reconsider it.

In most diets, distillers can't really fully replace soy or canola-the amino acid profile is quite different. But we can try and utilize more of it to reduce protein costs.

Distillers used to contain a good amount of corn oil about 10 to 14% dry matter basis. This limited the amount we could feed-especially paired with corn silage diets. However, the distilling process has changed and now most distillers-both modified wet and dry-has a oil level of only 5-8% dry matter basis. Now we can feed more of this product, if it fits.

But there is still a limit on how much you can feed. Typically, it is 10# dry matter for Holsteins and 7.5# dry matter for Jerseys (the rest of the breeds falling somewhere in between). These numbers are thumb rules. The amount you can safely feed will also be determined by the other ingredients in the diet and how it all balances together.

But it is an opportunity, for now.

If you want to weigh in on this, please email us at mctech@centurytel.net.

4. Cows like to lie down with their front slightly more elevated than their rear.

Most cows tend to like front end slightly elevated-not sure what prompts this behavior-but may have to do with an old predator alertness thing. Heaping stalls with bedding or sand so that her front end is slightly elevated helps cow comfort more than a level stall.

5. Cows will face the wall to self regulate temperature-cold or hot.

Noticed more in free stalls, but if the cows are choosing the wall stalls and staying away from the middle or stalls closer to the feed-they are having a stress issue and most likely not ruminating properly.

It's been interesting to see what these studies are coming out with and how best to utilize them. You can do your own study too. Ask your nutritionist to post some motion sensor cameras at the barn for a few days and document what is really happening with your cows. Then take that information and use it to your benefit.

Nutrition & Hairy Warts

Just when you think you've heard it all about hairy warts, something new comes along.

We know that hairy warts are caused by a spiral-shaped bacteria called *Treponema*. This bacteria literally screws itself into the soft areas in the hooves and can sit there, dormant, for years, causing lesions to break out when the cow is under stress. Most often, the cow is infected when she is a heifer, when her hooves are softer.

We also know that we can prevent it by cleaning up wet areas and hardening the hooves through the use of footbaths and feeding zinc.

Recently, studies have shown that hairy wart outbreaks are connected to sudden shifts in the cow's diet. In the study, rapid increases in grain after freshening caused the bacteria to trigger, grow and was found both in the rumen and the hooves.

The question is, in cows that it was found in both the rumen and the hooves, can the bacteria be ingested, lay dormant and then travel to the hooves when stressed? Also does the bacteria produce any toxins or cause any other harm to the rumen? We know what it does to the hooves.

The key thing to remember is that it is very important to have a stable rumen. More important than we ever thought before now- a cow with hairy warts milks 20-50% less than a cow without them. To provide a stable rumen:

1. Make all changes slowly.

Changes should be made over a 7-14 day period to work with the rumen bugs.

2. Work feed up gradually.

Cows should reach "full feed" in a topdress herd 21-30 days after freshening.

3. Watch continually for signs of acidosis.

Low fat test, sorting, loose light-colored manure are some of the basic signs of subclinical acidosis. Add a buffer just to be sure.

4. Use a toxin binder and yeast products.

Molds and wild yeast (different than purchased yeast) can cause some major rumen instability.

A stable rumen is always the way to go for better health and production.

I'm at the end again. Wow, that went fast! I hope you found a few things you could try to improve milk at your place. Thanks and have a good one.