The Scoop

Windshield time Topics

Spring work will be starting soon, as soon as the fields firm up after the last rain. Spring planting is always a busy time, but there is a lot of windshield time during the day to do a lot of thinking. This time, let's talk about a few issues that have been cropping up, to think about as you get the work done.

When BMR Fails

First, let's get something straight.

Feeding BMR or similar low lignin corn silage will produce more milk.

The silage has more digestible energy than conventional corn silage. In fact, the NDFD 30 (a measure of digestibility) is 9-10 points higher on average than conventional corn silage. We know from studies, that for every one point rise in NDFD 30 the cows will usually milk about 1/2 pound more. That means that on average, you should expect a 4-5 pound increase in 4% fat corrected milk. Sometimes, the milk increase is higher-up to 10 pounds more milk or more.

But other times, there doesn't seem to be much of an increase. Let's talk about why that may happen.

1. You're not using enough in the diet.

BMR/LL corn silage will increase the digestibility in any amount, but if you want to see real differences in milk production-it should be fed as 60% of the forage needs. Adding in more haylage dilutes down the effect of the digestible fiber. Alfalfa typically tests 45% NDFD30, while BMR corn silage tests 65% NDFD30 on average. Fed at the 60% alfalfa-40% corn silage rate, the overall NDFD30 result is 53 NDFD30-a drop of 4-5 points of NDFD30 or 2-3 pounds more milk. That's half the expected increase.

2. You're feeding it with another highly digestible feed.

BMR/LL is such a highly digestible fiber that feeding it along with another feed that has highly digestible fiber such as sorghum silage, grass silage or excellent quality alfalfa can result in a form of acidosis. Feeding a lower digestibility fiber such as straw or cottonseed can help reduce this risk.

3. The particle size is too small.

BMR/LL corn silage has some pretty fragile cell walls-with the reduced lignin. It doesn't create the fiber mat the same way

Building the milk check....

In addition to increasing milk and components, here are some practices that will build your milk check:

1. Get cows pregnant.
Cows that have longer days in milk simply don't milk as much. For each day a cow is open after optimal time (for example 170 days) she loses between $2-$7 per day. (Un of IL)

2. Get heifers milking.
Heifers should start their lactation at 23-24 months. For every day beyond that date costs $2 per day on heifers that aren't paying you back yet. (Un of IL)

3. Lower SCC.
For each linear score drop, about a 50,000 drop, milk will elevate 2-2.5 pounds. Plus the increased premium bonuses. (NC Un)

4. Improve feed efficiency
The herd should be producing 1.5 pounds of 3.5 energy corrected milk per pound of dry matter. Improving your herd for a 1.4 to a 1.5 equals about 42 cents per cow per day. (Un of IL)

5. Get timely hoof trimming done.
A lame cow can cost upwards of $122 per animal. Regular trimming can reduce the severity of problems and prevent culling.

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Odds & Ends.....

Prices heard this week:
Corn: $2.92-2.99 per bu.
Soybeans: $8.60-8.70 per bu.

150 RFV Hay: Large squares are worth approx. .897 per point of RFV.

Springers: $1100-1600 med grade
Cull cows: $0.52-0.67per pound
Bull calves: $110-145

Connections:
Call us at 1-800-700-9334 or email us at mctech@centurytel.net to get connected
* Wanted: springers, young cows and short breds.
* For sale: Kuhn bale wrapper rw1400
* For sale: 7.5 hp Maport vacuum pump
* For sale: Darikool bulk tank washer
* For sale: 6 one touch milkers
* For sale: Val Metal 18 ft. silo unloader
* For sale: 1755 Oliver Perkins conversion. New PTO shaft & hub.
* 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.

In a free society, what is more important, the logic of capitalism or a man's conscience.-DNP

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"Common Sense Innovations"

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conventional corn will. Make sure the theoretical length of cut is 0.75 to 1 inch.

4. The corn silage wasn't processed.

It's a myth that the corn kernels on BMR always remain soft. Process to get the full use of the starch.

5. There was too much rain during the vegetative growth period of the plant.

Too much rain will raise the lignin content of any type of corn. In BMR/ LL corn, the NDFD30 levels can lower similar conventional corn.

6. It was planted at too high of a population.

Starch levels are affected if the plants are planted too densely. The BMR corn has a flex ear rather than a fixed ear, so the plant does better with lower populations than conventional to retain good starch levels. A maximum population of 32,000 is recommended.

Now, there are a lot of reasons why any type of corn silage doesn't seem to be working: yeasts, molds, low corn amounts, poor fermentation-you name it. But few varieties of corn silages have the potential to produce as much milk as some of the BMR and/or Low Lignin varieties we've been seeing in the past few years. Maybe it's time to try them out.

Dirty Bacteria

We've talked quite a bit in the past about soil-borne bacteria like clostridias and environmental streps. While these are important, especially to udder health, there are a few more that can really cause some trouble-especially in the spring and summer. Let's look at two in particular:

Red Water

Red water is caused by a bacteria found in the dirt and in the bones of contaminated carcasses. Cattle will ingest the bacteria, where it can live inside the animal for several years-without causing any harm. It's only when the animal experiences liver damage that the bacteria spores germinate into vegetative cells that multiply and produce toxins that destroy the red blood cells in the body.

Red water is named for the dark purple or red urine that can occur if an animal has developed the disease. Other symptoms include fever, jaundice, depression, abdominal pain, trouble breathing and sudden death.

To prevent red water, the key is to control live damage in animals-especially in those that are pastured. Liver damage from liver flukes is the most common problem that causes outbreaks of red water. If you pasture cows or young stock near ponds, river banks or marshy grounds-have a good parasite control program that includes flukeacides like Curatrem, Valbazen or Ivomec Plus.

Liver damage can also occur from mycotoxins, fatty liver syndrome and high nitrates. Liver damage is not a guarantee that cows or heifers will develop red water but minimizing these problems will reduce the odds.

Listeria

Moving right along to another bacteria that hides in the dirt. When listeria finds its way into spoiled silages, the low acidity of those silages cause the bacteria to grow rapidly. With a small amount of this bacteria-a cow's rumen bacteria would naturally kill off the invader. But the rapid growth in spoiled silage will produce enough bacteria to overwhelm the cow's ruminal bacteria and cause symptoms.

THE BUZZ...

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

Winterkill:

We'll know more in just a few days, but so far, things don't look too bad. That's considering the lack of snow cover we had this winter, not to mention that it rained a few times.

Sure, some weak fields probably won't make it: old stands, low fertility, low pH or stressed during the growing season.

See, that's what we didn't have-much stress during that time. The alfalfa went into the dormant season with plenty of moisture and decent root growth. That's a plus for survival. During the spring, there didn't seem to be as much heaving, so not much kill from that either.

Additives:

I've been out to a few farms this past month where to cut costs the basics were cut: salt, vitamins or grain; for example, but the purchased additives were kept in the diets. Additives like enzymes, synthetic amino acids, etc. are great compliments to a balanced diet, but the basics come first. It will cost you far more to skip the basics: Fiber, energy, protein, minerals, salt and vitamins, than any additive will add to your income. When you want to cut cost, closely scrutinize the additives. they should bring you a 5 to 1 return on investment. (Un of IL) If it doesn't, cut it.

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

The symptoms depend on how much of the bacteria was consumed and what nerves are involved in the infection. Cows or heifers can get encephalitis-a brain infection that causes them walk in a circle. If the nerves around the eyes are infected, they can get a condition called bovine iritis, which looks almost the same as pink eye damage. If the nerves around the reproductive area are effected, the cow will abort. Fevers are also common, in less severe cases. Death can also occur.

Prevention is more simple than treatment. Avoid feeding spoiled feed. That means avoiding the top layer on the bunker or pile, if it was exposed to air. Tossing aside the spoilage in bags caused by rodents. Clean out bunks that have feed spoiling in them. And don't feed the silage that was scraped off the walls of a silo.

Prevention also comes when handling any silage. Reduce the amount of dirt that ends up in the silage/haylage-both during harvest and during feed out. And don't feed out the silage directly on the dirt.

This all sounds like common sense, right? It is and that is why we don't see many cases of listeria anymore. But it is still around, and it hurts when you have an outbreak.

Fat & Protein Ratios

Heading into lower milk prices, the premiums paid for fat and protein become even more important. Producing enough pounds of both changes your income.

When you get your test results back from the creamery, people generally question the results. If you're getting good components, are you leaving some milk on the table? If you're getting low components, is it because they have acidosis? To answer these questions, try using component ratios.

You can use these ratios to determine if you're on track or not:

For most holsteins, we use a fat:protein ratio. If the fat test divided by the protein test (percent divided by percent) is 1.25-1.30, that is a normal spread between the components. If the ratio is higher >1.30, there may be some milk left on the table. If the ratio is lower, there may be some subclinical or dry matter intake issue.

For most colored breeds or crossbreds, we use a protein:fat ratio. Divide the protein percent by the fat percent and here are the average results by breed:

Ayershire	.82-.83
Brown Swiss	.84-.85
Guernsey	.74-.75
Jersey	.75-.76

If the ratio is higher, there may be acidosis or an intake issue. If the ratio is lower, you might be leaving milk on the table.

If the herd is mainly fresh or tail-ending, the ratios will be a little off as the averages were figured for herds 140-180 DIM, so keep that in mind.

It is a neat little tool, just in case you had a question. And if you do have an issue, don't hesitate to call us for a copy of or free fat test checklist to troubleshoot the problem.

Wow, planting season already and first crop around the corner. Here's to hoping your hay fields are healthy, you have no breakdowns and everything gets done on time.

Happy planting!