

Combine Thoughts

Normally, this time of year, we'd be talking about wrapping up harvest and moving on to spreading manure and getting everything ready for winter. Not so this year, right? A lot of rain delays and in some places, it hasn't even froze hard yet-delaying harvest even further. And break downs-well, let's not even go there. Harvest can be super busy, but there is still a lot of combine-time to do some thinking. Here are some of the latest topics to chew on:

Trouble with the Corn?

What a crop year we've had-really a mixed bag. High moisture corn is currently being harvested and the first tests aren't in yet. But I think we can agree, there were some problems with the corn this year with wet, cool temperatures, and with the exception of a couple of days, it was right up until harvest. Wet, cool days present a few challenges to corn quality. Here are a few:

1. The corn is wetter than normal.

This can be good or bad. The wetter corn has a higher fermentable starch rate that can improve milk production but it can also cause acidosis or depressed butterfat in the milk. If top-dressing, be careful not to feed more than 8 pounds

in a feeding. Add another feeding, if you have to. In all cases-TMR or topdress, add a buffer (or raise it) to help stabilize the rumen.

2. The corn may be lower in test weight.

It is going to be pretty important this year to check your starch level in your corn. If the starch is too low, you'll need to make it up by feeding another energy source.



3. Wild yeast will be a problem this year.

Wild yeast likes wet conditions and can grow very rapidly in corn or corn silage. The yeast cause rumen instability which can lead to fluctuating butterfat and/or SCC. Test to see where your yeast count is at, and if high-add rumen stabilizers such as Nutritek, Cellmanax or Omnigen WYC in the diet and/or acetic acid like Cropcure or Ultracurb to the TMR mix.

4. Mold and mycotoxins may be an issue.

Penicillium and fusarium molds love cool, wet weather. Both of these molds have already been identified in some of the samples this year. Both of these molds create mycotoxins that impact breeding. Make sure you have a mycotoxin binder in the diet, just in case.

Right now, the jury is still out on the corn. Maybe it is the best corn we'll ever have. But the way the growing conditions were, it's best to be prepared.

Heading into winter...

I know, I know, but it is coming soon. Cows change metabolism, new feeds are fed, and the cold starts to set in. All are a recipe for lower production. Here are some tips to help get ready for the season:

1. Go over your inventories

Time to figure out what can be fed. Can you feed higher corn silage in the winter once it is fermented? Time to find out.

2. Adjust the lighting.

Extending photo-light periods can improve appetites and metabolism-helping production.

3. Check for molds, yeasts and mycotoxins.

These will most likely be a problem this year. Test your feeds, especially corn silage, high moisture corn and earlage and make a plan before a problem starts.

4. Worm everything

It was a great year for parasites. Worm after the ground freezes-even if they were kept inside and especially if you haven't wormed them in awhile.

5. Get out the calf jackets.

Jackets warm the calves by 40%. Figure out how many you'll need and get them ready.

6. Check out windbreaks and heifer shelters.

Make sure they are in good repair before the cold hits.

Ads & Ends.....

heard this week:

Corn: \$2.55-2.73 per bu.

Soybeans: \$8.73-9.08 per bu.

150 RFV Hay: Large squares are worth approx. .90 per point of RFV.

Springers: \$1100-1400 med grade

Cull cows: \$0.52-62 per pound

Bull calves: \$75-155

Connections:

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

* For sale: Bull calves & steers, all sizes

* For sale: Bulls for sale

* For sale: Open & bred heifers for sale

* Wanted: Used parlor

* Wanted: Good quality grass or grass mix hay

* For sale: New Holland 851 round baler

* For sale: Brillion 4-row corn cultivator

* For sale: Oliver '77 row crop Tractor

* For sale: Massey-Ferguson 10 square baler

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.



One out of every 12 jobs in the economy is connected in some way, shape or form to what happens on the farm. Tom Vilsack

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Improving Pregs with Methionine

Getting cows pregnant and having them stay pregnant can be quite a task. The cow's reproductive system is pretty complex and about a zillion factors can affect pregnancies and if you're having problems-it can be tough to figure out the issue. Let's add something a little more direct to solving some pregnancy issues: methionine.

Methionine is a limiting amino acid, which makes up part of the protein the cow eats. The problem is, today's cows with their higher production, demand more and more of this amino acid-and most common feeds like corn, soybeans and alfalfa are actually low in it. To compensate for this, there are protected methionine supplements to give the extra boost cows need for production, fat and protein.

Now there is some new research that shows that feeding methionine in the dry period can help reproduction by producing embryos with a higher lipid (fat) concentration. This higher lipid concentration is an important source of energy for the developing embryo-producing a stronger embryo. In those studies (UW 2015, U of IL 2017) early embryonic deaths dropped from 19% to 6%-over a 50% reduction!

The studies also showed that certain genes were expressed and produced more estrogen when the cows were fed methionine. In other words, if methionine is fed in the dry period, the cow will produce more estrogen, come into heat faster

and get pregnant more easily after she freshens.

Finally, another recent study (Zhou 2016) showed that methionine fed in the dry period reduced clinical ketosis by up to 50%. In transition and fresh cows methionine reduces the need for rapid energy mobilization by reducing inflammation. And of course, any reduction in metabolic disorders such as ketosis will always lead to better reproduction and production.

The recommended level of metabolizable methionine is 30 grams per head per day in the dry period, 46 grams per head per day in lactation. However, amino acids should be balanced out in ratio with other essential amino acids-it's not just quite as simple as getting a bag and adding it. Get yourself a good nutritionist who can see where the amino acids are already at with your own feeds-and can recommend the proper supplementation to help improve your repro.

Are Your Heifers Holding You Back?

Did you know that the first lactation heifers are actually the key to your improved production?

With the average herd age at 2.5 years, the heifer's production sets the ceiling for the whole herd. At 10-15 weeks, the average production of the heifers is indicative of the whole herd. **A herd will not outperform the production standard set by the first calf heifers.** In other words, a herd with 70 pound "peaks" in first lactation will not be capable of reaching an

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

Balancing fatty acids:

Most of you have probably heard of balancing amino acids to enhance production. The latest in dairy nutrition is balancing fatty acids. We know that certain types of fats affect the cow differently. Some fats are digested and absorbed and used by the cow for putting on condition, some have an effect on fat test, while others can enhance production (called fatty acid biohydrogenation). This technology is advancing very quickly. Soon, we'll be able to test the milk for the fatty acids that are in it, and be able to formulate a fatty acid profile in the feed to enhance production and components like butterfat. In the meantime, we have models that can estimate the profile in the milk, based on your current butterfat test and make adjustments in the fatty acids in your feeds for improvement in production and components.

Hay market:

Hay prices in the area, compared to the rest of the country, are slightly depressed. Our area had plenty of rainfall and there is plenty of hay on the market. Having said that, most of it is average to poor quality. Most round bales are bringing between \$25-45 per bale.

Dry quality hay has been hard to find this year-due to all the rainfall in the area. Large square bales are bringing \$45 to \$68 per bale.

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

average of 85 pounds. Check it out on your test sheet.

Improving those 1st lactation peaks has more to do with growth before freshening than age at freshening.

Heifers that are held back to grow more before breeding so that they freshen in at 28 months or more, tend to have lower conception rates and lowered milk production.

Early freshening-below 22 months at freshening-isn't much better due to the tremendous growth that has to happen in a short period of time. Heifers that start in the milking line at 20-22 months will continue to grow during their 1st, 2nd and even 3rd lactation, limiting their milk potential overall.

Achieving optimal growth and improved production seems to work at 23-24 months. Improving growth by 1 pound during the growing phase before freshening can potentially increase milk 6.9 pounds.

The industry standards right now are to aim for 1) doubling the birth size at weaning, 2) 55% of mature body weight at pre-breeding and 3) 85% of mature bodyweight at post calving.

A group that is often overlooked is the post weaned to breeding group. Typically this group is receiving weigh-backs or less-than-optimal hay and yet, has the greatest potential for growth.

Unfortunately, there no one diet or protein level or additive alone that will improve this on every farm. And we still need to feed weigh-backs and the hay.

The best thing you can do is find out where you are really at with growth in the heifers and put together a diet that makes sense and benefits you and your heifers.

Do Facers Pay?

One of the things we talked about earlier is that wild yeast is going to be a problem this year.

Wild yeast causes rumen instability and poor absorption of nutrients that results in a whole host of symptoms from loose cows to runaway high SCC. One way to prevent yeast from multiplying and causing trouble is to face your bunker or pile.

Yeast likes oxygen and any method of silage removal that results in gouges, fractures and holes will allow air to penetrate deep into the pile, causing the yeast to rapidly multiply. Having a straight, smooth face on your pile or bunker will limit the oxygen and the wild yeast. To reduce feed spoilage and improve cow health and production-it pays to invest in a facer.

But wait, that's not the only reason to invest in a facer.

The power, and wear and tear on a bucket to dislodge and scrape well-packed feed can result in repairs that cost more than a facer and can put that important piece of equipment out of use for a period of time.

There are two main types of facers: rakes or rotaries. The rake is a single piece of equipment and requires little repair or maintenance. It is much faster to use than the rotary facer, however, it does not produce as smooth of a face as the rotary and doesn't break up haylage clumps as well. The rotary facer produces a smooth face that really limits oxygen and preserves feed. It also breaks up haylage clumps and frozen silage better than a rake. On the flip side, the rotary facer has more moving parts and requires more maintenance and repair. It's all about what fits best for your farm.

Facers are just another tool you can use to keep your hard-earned feed from spoiling and the cows healthy. A good investment anytime.

I think we got it all in! Have a great harvest and keep it safe out there.