



Professional Nutrition & Management Services

# DAIRY-UPDATE

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## Feeding Strategies when Corn is High \$\$

By Scott Cieslar

The unusually wet, cool spring and record-breaking summer heat of 2011 will not be soon forgotten and Ontario producers are experiencing a few common issues:

- 1) shortage of corn silage due to late planting
- 2) high price of corn and alternatives
- 3) feeding extremely high quality haylage, or "rocket fuel."

With widespread late spring planting, this year has proven challenging for forage inventories. Corn silage inventories need to be conserved in many situations, and alternative feeds are needed to fill the void. The simplest alternative is to increase feeding of haylage and grain corn -- but that represents a problem if you are stuck purchasing expensive corn.

Ruminants are nature's great recyclers, and can make use of many by-product feeds without sacrificing milk production. Unfortunately, many of those by-products move with the price of corn. Those that are a particularly good deal will eventually succumb to the laws of supply and demand -- supplies will tighten and the price will increase.

Wet brewers grains have been a cost-effective alternative, but recent supply issues have left many producers scrambling for alternatives. Wheat midds or shorts looked to be the most economical alternative, but due to their low density, they can be difficult to handle and store.

**Come see us at the OUTDOOR FARM SHOW!**

**September 13-15. We're in the 4H Pavilion.**

## Should we use alternative feed?

The easiest method to evaluate commodity and by-product prices relative to corn and soybeans is to use the Peterson equation. This takes into account both energy and protein. An example follows:

First, calculate A:

$$\frac{[(TDN \text{ corn} \times CP \text{ test feed}) - (CP \text{ corn} \times TDN \text{ of test feed})]}{[(TDN \text{ corn} \times CP \text{ of SBM}) - (CP \text{ of corn} \times TDN \text{ of SBM})]}$$

Next, calculate B:

$$\frac{[(CP \text{ of test feed}) - (CP \text{ of SBM} \times A)]}{CP \text{ of corn}}$$

The \$ value per tonne of test feed equals:

$$(A \times \$ \text{ price per MT of SBM}) + (B \times \$ \text{ price per MT of corn})$$

The example below compares dried distillers grains with solubles to corn priced at \$325 and soybean meal 48% at \$400.

	TDN	CP
Corn	88	8.5
Soybean Meal 48%	81	48
DDGS	80	26

$$A = \frac{[(88 \times 26) - (8.5 \times 80)]}{[(88 \times 48) - (8.5 \times 81)]} = 0.51$$

$$B = \frac{[(26) - (48 \times 0.51)]}{8.5} = 0.178$$

$$\$ \text{ value per tonne of test feed} = (0.51 \times \$400) + (0.178 \times \$325) = \$261.78$$

Therefore, if dry distillers grains were less than \$261/MT, they would be a good deal against corn and soybean. This method does not take into account all the factors that will affect lactating dairy cows, but is a quick and easy way to determine relative feed values when looking at different commodities.

## Feeding Rocket Fuel

BSC dairy reps work closely with their customers to develop strategies to maximize forage utilization. One comment that is often dealt with when expounding the virtues of really high quality haylage is that it becomes 'rocket fuel' and straw must be added to balance the diet. This is not necessarily the case.

The cow requires a certain amount of effective NDF or fiber/scratch to keep the rumen healthy and working well. When we cut haylage very early, the NDF content can be quite low and the protein high. This is good and necessary if you want to feed a very high forage diet.

When this type of haylage is used in rations along with good quality corn silage, the grain needed to maintain excellent milk production becomes minimal. The difficulty people have with 'rocket fuel' haylage is that they don't feed enough of it because they have been unwilling to reduce the grain content sufficiently. Thus they are forced to use straw or coarse hay to bring effective fiber into the ration.

Instead of using straw as a fiber source, BSC promotes using lower fiber forages (cut younger), but feeding a lot more of them. This gives the cow the same amount of total effective fiber, but uses a lot less grain.

The result is healthier cows, better production, reduced exposure to volatile grain markets – and more money in your pocket.

### **Field Walk Highlights 2011**

*By Colin Pool*

BSC recently hosted summer forage field walks – small hands-on sessions, packed with leading edge information.

Discussion focused on sugar content in forage to help offset higher energy costs of grain and fat products in rations. Patrice Vincent from Belisle Solution Nutrition in Quebec suggested taking a closer look at the addition of clover into hay blends. His cutting strategy differs from most – he advises cutting in early bud to capture the best feed possible.

Guy Forand, also from Quebec, approached forage production from a soil fertility perspective – touching on the importance of calcium and soil health. Grass selection is important – choose a species that complements the soil type. Guy encouraged including fescues in the hay blend (instead of timothy) because of their excellent regrowth.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our host farms – Hymark Farms in Essex and AHE Dairy Farms in Watford.

### **ANNOUNCEMENT**



BSC welcomes Beate Sillery to the Ruminant Sales Team. Beate received her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Applied Science in Nuertingen, Germany. The topic of her thesis was "Using Canola as a bypass Protein in Dairy Nutrition".

Beate lives near Exeter with her husband Steve and son Reeze, and looks forward to working with dairy clients.

**Mark your calendar:**

## **BSC CALF SCHOOL**

### ***Monitoring Heifer Growth***

**October 5, 2011 at 8pm**

**Hosted by Mike & Harry Van Wieren  
Four Clover Dairy Farms  
8157 Jericho Road, Thedford**

*Excellent early growth in heifer calves translates to better returns during the early lactations of their milking career.*

*Guest speaker Kathleen Shore will demonstrate how to measure heifer growth, and how to use Grober's formulas to calculate and monitor growth in the herd.*

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**DAIRY UPDATE** is published in the interest of helping dairy producers become more profitable. We welcome your comments.

Also available on-line at [www.bsccanimalnutrition.com](http://www.bsccanimalnutrition.com)

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