

# THE FORAGER

*Agronomics with livestock in mind!*

## **Dairy & The FALL SLUMP!**

A “fall slump” in milk production is a common occurrence on many dairy farms. It is characterized by some or all of the following: a moderate to large decrease in milk production, a decrease in intake, loose manure, and cycling intakes. Fall slumps are often a result of feeding corn silage that has not had adequate time to complete the fermentation process. Depending on the specific crop and conditions, most ensiled forages require 3-6 weeks before the fermentation process is complete. The fall slump may occur because fresh corn forage contains high levels of fermentable sugars that can put the rumen into sub acute acidosis. The condition occurs most with corn silage because it is usually the highest proportion of forage fed in the diet. Fall slumps are most apparent when cows are switched abruptly from old corn silage to freshly cut corn forage. This occurs frequently on small farms that have only one silo for corn silage.

A fall slump may also occur when switching from one corn silage to another because the new silage (this year’s) may be lower in nutritive value. Not accounting for differences in the dry matter and nutrient content of the new silage when changing silos can certainly cause problems.

Several approaches can be taken to minimize the incidences of a fall slump. First, for dairyman with adequate forage inventory and silos they should plan to allow new corn silage to ensile for at least 2 to 3 months before feeding. Next, when switching from one silo to another, try to make the change gradually over a minimum of a 10 to 14 day period. This is obviously very difficult to do if you only have one silo. For this reason, a case could be made to encourage farmers with only one main silo for corn silage to also put up a small bag (or drive over pile) of corn silage every year that can be mixed with new silage and fed out during the fall. Last but not least, new forages should be tested for dry matter and nutrient content and diet formulations should be adjusted accordingly.

*(Edited from an article by Dr. Limin Kung, U of DE)*

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## **Monster in the Cornfield...**

When producers plant continuous corn, corn rootworms [can] become a severe pest problem. The planting of continuous corn suits rootworms because they lay eggs in the soil during late summer, those eggs hatch the following spring, and the subsequent larvae require corn roots to grow and develop into adults. Because corn rootworms required continuous corn, crop rotation has been, and for many areas continues to be, an effective management strategy.

However, within the last 15 years, rootworms have adapted to crop rotation. By the late 1980s, a strain of the northern corn rootworm was discovered that had a two-year life cycle (extended diapause) and survived the annual rotation of corn with soybeans. In the mid-1990s, a variant of the western corn rootworm appeared in Illinois that laid its eggs in soybeans, and the larvae attacked the corn planted the following year.

With the increased production of biofuels, along with the continuing need for corn as feed/food the demand for corn will inevitably increase and the amount of continuous corn [acreage] will also increase. These acres will be susceptible to the traditional corn rootworm, and the remaining rotated acres will be susceptible to the variants of the northern and western corn rootworm, creating the potential for a real monster lurking in all of our corn fields.

While crop rotation can still assist the control of rootworms in fields, the introduction and use of both appropriate pesticides and hybrids that have stacked traits, such as those with the Bt trait or YieldGard Rootworm® can help to eradicate this “monster” in the cornfield. When selecting hybrids for next year’s crop season, consider all facts... helping to avert agronomic concerns, while providing livestock with quality feeds!

*(Edited from an article by Drs. Tollefson, Prasifka and Kaeb,  
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