

DAIRYINFO

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How long should a new crop ferment before feeding?

In a few short weeks, the corn harvest will begin and move at a rapid pace until the job is completed. It can be tempting to feed this new crop of silage immediately. But, don't jump the gun and begin feeding your new-crop corn silage too soon! Feeding a crop that hasn't properly fermented can lower dry matter intake (DMI), decrease milk production, and cause digestive upsets. Allowing time for adequate fermentation creates a more palatable and digestible feed for optimum DMI and milk production.

Traditionally, nutritionists have recommended allowing silage to ferment for three to four weeks before feeding, although recent research from Cumberland Valley Analytical Services Inc. (CVAS) indicates waiting longer may increase silage digestibility. The CVAS study showed that corn silage continued to ferment for four months after ensiling. "The common misconception is that silage is stable after four weeks," said Kathy Emery, veterinarian and Mycogen Seeds dairy nutritionist. "Actually, starch and fiber digestibility continue to improve for up to four months." Emery provides these reminders when preparing to feed a new silage crop:

- Oxygen is the enemy of quality silage. During feedout, prevent the penetration of air into the silage. Ensure the face is smooth-shaven to minimize the surface area exposed to air.
- Allow silage to ferment a minimum of four weeks before feeding; wait longer if possible.
- If you anticipate that you may have to feed the new crop sooner, consider using a bacterial inoculant to help drop the pH of the silage rapidly and improve the overall fermentation. An optimum fermentation will lower dry matter losses and preserve nutrients in the silage. Follow label directions for dilution and application and do not allow liquid inoculants to heat in the sun.
- Plan ahead to ensure you aren't forced to feed silage that hasn't properly fermented. Manage your inventory and, if possible, have carryover feed available.

(Edited from an article in Dairy Herd Management)

We recommend using a quality, research-tested inoculant or preservative to help aid the fermentation process and conserve valuable nutrients in the silage. Use BIOTAL or KEMIN for results!



Not just what they eat, but how they eat it

A growing body of research proves it's not only about what a cow eats, but also how the cow consumes the ration. "When we formulate rations for cows, we do not take into account how the feed is consumed," says Trevor DeVries, associate professor of animal science at the University of Guelph (Ontario). But, how a ration is consumed is just as important because it can have a direct effect on rumen health and fermentation, he says. At the California Animal Nutrition Conference (May 2011), he pointed to a research trial where cows diagnosed with severe metritis 7-9 days after calving consumed less feed and spent less time at the feed bunk during the two-week period prior to calving. This was nearly three weeks before clinical signs of infection were observed. In this particular study, for every 10-minute decrease in feeding time during the week prior to calving, cows were 1.7 times more likely to be diagnosed with severe metritis. For every 2.2-pound decrease in dry matter intake during this period, cows were nearly three times more likely to be diagnosed with severe metritis. More recent work shows similar findings with cows that developed subclinical ketosis. Cows diagnosed with subclinical ketosis during the week after calving showed differences in feeding behavior and dry matter intake as early as one week prior to calving. These studies provide us with a basic understanding of feeding behavior—particularly how, when, what and if cows eat the feed provided to them—and can be used to maximize the potential of our rations.

(Edited from an article by the Dairy Herd Management)

Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call me! From calves to heifers, dry and lactating cows, my goal is to help you.
That's Renaissance's commitment!

VOLUME 12 – Number 8 – August 2011
THE TEAM FOR RESULTS

FALL PLANTING!

Have you determined what you will need in the way of forage for the coming fall and winter? It is not too soon to review your forage inventory and consider planting to help meet any possible shortfall. TRITICALE products are among the excellent choices, based on extensive research nationally. You might also consider a ryegrass variety or even ForagePlus® Oats! Many of these forage sources can give you a cutting yet this fall and (in some cases) another cutting in the spring, before seeding with corn. As you consider fall seeding possibilities, plan ahead and order your corn for next spring! By ordering early, you have a better chance of getting the hybrids you really want. This may be especially important following a difficult growing season that many areas have experienced. Make a difference this fall and for the future... plant quality for results!

Don't let heifers or calves get too much sun

With temperatures in the triple digits over a large portion of the country in recent weeks, it's a good time to check shade structures for livestock. Good shade or shaded areas can help reduce heat stress, and help heifers to maintain the growth rates and reproductive performance that are essential to your operation. Consider placing shade structures with a north to south orientation. As the sun moves across the sky, the shaded area will move and heifers will follow. The area left behind is exposed to sunlight and given an opportunity to dry. If the pen has adequate drainage, this may also help prevent the development of mud holes beneath the shaded area(s). Feed bunks are typically oriented north to south, which allows the shade structure to be arranged parallel to feed. It's also a good idea to do a maintenance check on existing structures. Shade cloth should be kept tight, so it will not be damaged by wind. Replace the cloth when it has deteriorated due to environmental conditions. Maintenance coatings may need to be replaced on the structural steel (or even wood) components. Shade is also important for calves, along with a well-ventilated area. Heat stress can critically impact the growth and development of calves. A key to good calf and heifer care during these hot and humid days of summer is to keep them as cool as possible using well-ventilated, shaded areas, along with a continuous source of fresh, clean water, and sufficient forages and feed.

(Edited from an article by the Dairy Calf & Heifer Association)



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CHECK IT OUT!

