The keyword in 2018 is variability. Corn silage chopped before the rain delays is definitely feeding different than the silage chopped after the rains. The later drier corn silage is much lower in NDFd and a little higher in starch content than the earlier crop. Yeast counts are extremely high as this corn sat through a period of extreme moisture, heat and humidity. Drier silages will have lower packing density making them even more susceptible to even higher yeast counts and possible mold growth. Face management and feed-out strategies will be key in managing this poorer, drier corn silage. For the earlier corn silage here is some of our observations:

Tonnage – We have heard several reports of record setting tonnages for the 2018 harvest (near 30 ton/A on dry land). Above normal precipitation and long growing degree days helped push better germination rates and higher plant heights resulting in increased tonnages.

Starch – This extra plant height has diluted the starch content to some small degree on most farms requiring more corn products to be fed to make up for the starch shortage. However, we are also seeing record corn yields (well over 200 bu/A) which has helped maintain normal starch levels. We are also seeing lots of variability from field to field and variety to variety so increased testing to monitor starch content is highly recommended. Along with these record yields, we are hearing very high bushel test weights (many cases pushing 60 lb/bu) being reported. Historically, high test weight corn has very low 7 hour IVSD (55-65%) and therefore a very slow Kd rate (10-12%/h) potentially limiting milk production.

NDFd – We are seeing lower averages this year for NDF digestibility 30 hour. Taller corn plants have to build up more lignin to keep upright, thereby lowering NDFd. It is that simple.

Protein – We are also seeing slightly lower crude protein values on silages this year. Farmers cut fertilizer rates this year to save some cost and with less Nitrogen in the soil, there is less in the plants resulting in lower CP%. Toss in the higher tonnages with a set amount of N/A and there is just less to go around so this will also lower CP%’. Now add in the excess rainfall we saw this spring and summer leaching even more N out of the soil and there was even less N available resulting in even lower CP%’s than average.

Fat – We have noticed wild swings in the fat content on this year’s CS. We have seen both lower than normal (forage diluting the grain out) and very high contents (high bushel yield) so pay special attention to the fat content on both the corn silages and the HiMo corn products.