

Maximizing Production in Tough Times

Dennis Neumann started dairying on his own in 1978, with 28 cows and 40 acres. He started four miles from the dairy farm where he grew up. Soon, he sold that farm and rented another. "Forty cows grew into 70 and I bought this farm," he says of his current location near East Farmington, WI. At the same time, he milked cows on a Somerset, WI farm he had purchased. Dennis credits his wife, Dawn, and his daughters, Danette, Amy, and Becky, for helping through those early years. "I would not recommend anyone spread himself over two farms," says the dairyman. "You can't be in two places at once."

Getting all his cattle onto one farm was important. In 2007, Dennis consolidated his dairy operation at the East Farmington site. Today, he milks 439 cows (with 41 dry cows) and raises all his heifers and steers. He also farms 2,200 acres of corn, beans and alfalfa, all with the help of 15 employees. He survived the 1980s Farm Crisis when interest rose to 18 percent, so he's convinced he'll survive the current milk market with good nutrition.

Dennis relies on Munson Lakes Nutrition's Mike Foust for feeding advice. He speaks appreciatively of what Mike did for his dry cow program. "I gave him the (dry cow) facility and he gave us the ration," says the dairyman, adding, "The dry cows look nice, bulked up like they should be." Mike agrees, "If you meet the requirements of the dry cow, most other problems will disappear."

In December, Dennis added Land O'Lakes PROPEL energy pellet to his protein mix. At the same time, he changed the way in which he dropped the feed for his milking cows. The combination boosted production by 10 lbs to 83.5 lbs per cow. "I don't know how dairymen who are not optimizing their milk production at this time are going to weather these milk prices," he states.

People most important

There are only a few management principles Dennis considers critical to operating a successful dairy. The first is Standard Operating Procedure (S.O.P.). "Everyone has to be doing the same thing," he states. "Cows are boring. They like repetition, and because of that you have to have people who can be repetitious in their routines." The next is assembling a team of people who will work together to implement the S.O.P.s. Another important management principle is to pay attention to forage harvesting and storage. Selling his Somerset farm and concentrating on one location has allowed Dennis to concentrate on getting forage out of the field when it's ready and packing it right. "My feeder, Dan Harvey, does an excellent job of bunker management," he adds.

The bottom line, says Dennis, is that it takes a team of good people to make a successful dairy. He credits his herd manager Desi Anderson as well as outside resource people like Mike for his success. "It's about the Mikes, the vets, the hoof trimmer, the agronomist, and all the others who come to my dairy on a daily or weekly basis—it's about all of them," declares the East Farmington dairyman. ●



From left to right, Dan Harvey, feeder, Dennis Neumann, Desi Anderson, herd manager, and Mike Foust.

Lean on Us for Advice

By John Zander, General Manager



The spring rush is pretty much behind us and soon it will be time for haying season to begin. If you have any questions on your rations or any other aspect of your operation, I encourage you to keep the lines of communication open with your Munson Lakes Nutrition Sales Nutritionist. The expertise of our staff can be a valuable addition in making your operation run smoothly and effectively.

As you face the challenges of the current market, please remember that some things never change. The values that shaped our heritage will remain. MLN will continue to:

- Manufacture a great product at a fair price.
- Give great customer service.
- Base every decision on fairness and decency.

Upgrades

At MLN we are constantly looking at ways to be more efficient in meeting your nutrition needs. We are currently in the process of adding three bins for bulk ingredient storage which could eliminate having to cut and dispose of about 1200 bags per month. This not only helps in efficiency and cost but will also help us be a little kinder to the environment.

Another resource

We've just hired a calf and heifer specialist with expertise in animal nutrition and animal comfort. Read the story on page 4.

Maynard Moen has years of experience in consulting and in owning a commercial heifer-raising business. He has designed many barns and will be an excellent resource. Make use of Maynard's expertise by calling Munson Lakes Nutrition at 800-245-7717 or ask your MLN Sales Nutritionist to introduce you to Maynard. ●

A Trucker and a Sounding Board

Dan Zachmann takes his job seriously and his job is not just hauling feed. He's been driving truck since he graduated from Howard Lake Waverly High School in 1980. He started by hauling produce and groceries, in Minnesota and then in Florida. In the early '90s, he moved back to his hometown of Winsted and began hauling freight. It was four years ago this summer that Dan started driving truck for Munson Lakes Nutrition.

For Dan, hauling feed is only part of his job. "I look at myself as a communication link between the customer and the mill," he explains. "If the customer doesn't like something, I'll report it back to the main office, and if we're doing well and things are good, I'll report that, too." Dan says he tries to help his customers the best he can, and if he doesn't have the answers, he'll call someone who does.

Dan's parents, now retired, still live in Winsted and he has a brother who lives in Howard Lake. His sister-in-law, Sue Zachmann, works in the Munson Lakes Nutrition office. Dan also has three daughters, Rachel, 20, Brittany, 19, and Marie, 18, who live with their mother in Florida. On his off time, Dan enjoys hunting ducks, pheasants and deer and fishing for sunfish, northern, and walleye. ●



Cold Winter, Hot Summer: What's in Common?

By Jeff Thorpe, Dairy Nutrition Consultant

Answer: Both require more energy from our dairy cows. If your cows come up short on energy, production suffers, fat tests may be depressed, and pregnancy rates fall. The question is, "How do you solve the energy shortage while maintaining good cow health?" Corn can be used but is limited by lowering total ration fiber and total starch content of the ration; so this leaves fat as the logical source to raise energy. But fat has its limits, too. At high levels, it causes the protein mix to gum.

Last December, the energy problem became easier with the introduction of PROPEL® energy nugget from Land O'Lakes® Purina LLC. The great thing about PROPEL is that it can be mixed at whatever level is needed while

keeping the protein mix flowing. PROPEL is a high energy Macro-Encapsulation product specifically formulated to meet the energy requirements of high production cows for both winter and summer.

We have been able to replace high priced cottonseed in the ration with PROPEL and increase milk production three pounds or more based on equal energy replacement. That means we are getting more digestible energy to the cow for milk production.

PROPEL is very palatable. In testing against calcium salts, cows preferred it 17:1 and against prilled fats, 10:1. That means cows will have higher intakes while feeding PROPEL. This will improve body condition or reduce body weight

loss on early lactation cows which can improve reproduction performance, especially during energy challenges like the upcoming summer heat. It will also increase milk production while holding or improving components because intakes are optimized.

Using our Dynamic Nutrition System (DNS), your experienced MLN nutritionist can best cost your rations for the current tough economic conditions, without being limited by energy. This can reduce your cost to produce each pound of milk. PROPEL milk production responses have been two to five pounds or more.

Call your MLN nutritionist or Munson Lakes Nutrition at 800-245-7717. ●

Feeders Sold on Scale, Good Records



The Becker Family: Left to right, Judy, Jacob, Reynard, and Henry.

According to Henry and Judy Becker, these two things have dramatically improved the profitability of their beef cattle operation.

Becker Farms at Mayer, MN feeds about 40-head of beef cattle from 100 lbs. to finish every year. The centerpiece of their operation is a cattle chute and scale to work their animals and chart their progress. “By the time they leave here, they’ve been on the scale 12-14 times,” says Judy Becker, adding that the calves think the scale is their playpen.

This much-prized piece of equipment features a long stall with a head, which they used for dehorning, vaccinating, and implanting, and a side discharge door. “You can have them in the chute and there’s still a lot of room to work behind them,” says Henry.

The chute is convenient, but the scale receives even more praise. Judy still recalls a beef animal they shipped several years ago, before they invested in a scale. “The animal was off weight and we lost \$300,” she says. That doesn’t happen anymore.

The scale also helps the Beckers keep a close track on how their animals are gaining. That, plus a scale on their roller mill, tells them whether they are under- or over-feeding. “Both can waste money these days,” observes Munson Lakes sales nutritionist Mike Foust, who works with the family on their feeding program.

Henry and Judy credit their son Jacob for encouraging them to buy the scale and setting up a record-keeping system that tracks every aspect of the beef feeding operation. “I like to see the hard facts to know that something is really working,” says Jacob.

His computerized records tell the family their current feeding program works. They start two-week-old bull calves on Purina’s Calf Startena Amplicaf™. At six weeks (about 200 lbs.) the calves are weaned, dehorned, castrated, implanted, and switched to Calf Growena Concentrate. When they reach 400 lbs., they’re fed Munson’s 39% Beef Finisher all the way to finish weight. Throughout their stay, the animals are offered water, low quality roughage hay, and corn, which the Beckers process (roll) as coarse as possible.

During the last weighing period, between February 7 and March 22, the Beckers’ steers in the 1,000-1,150 lb. range had a feed efficiency of 6.44 lbs. of feed for each 1-lb. gain.

The Holstein steers were gaining 3.38 lbs. per day and the colored steers were gaining 4.16 lbs. per day. A salesman recently suggested switching to another supplement. With hard data in hand, the young beef producer was confident in his response. “I said, ‘Look at these figures. I don’t want to change.’”

There are other aspects of the Beckers’ beef feeding enterprise that deserve mention, like purchasing all their calves from one source, feeding only high quality corn, giving shots like clockwork, and making sure the animals always have feed and water.

But Henry and Judy credit the scale and Jacob’s fastidious record-keeping for much of their success. They’re also appreciative of Munson Lakes Nutrition and Mike Foust for helping them perfect their feeding program. “When we didn’t have the scale and we didn’t have Mike, we lost a lot of money,” Henry adds, with a chuckle. ●

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Calf and Heifer Specialist Joins Munson



Maynard Moen has worked for Land O'Lakes since the 1970s. Since the mid-1980s, he has worked as a calf and heifer specialist, consulting with dairies large and small in the areas of animal nutrition and comfort. "A comfortable animal with good nutrition is a good performer," declares Maynard. He has the experience to back up his knowledge. With a partner, Maynard owned a feedlot that raised 900 heifers a year for 11 different dairies.

As the new Calf and Heifer Sales Specialist at Munson Lakes Nutrition, Maynard will call on dairies in a defined territory and serve as a resource to other MLN

Sales Nutritionists on animal nutrition and comfort. "I've built a lot of buildings and I know a lot of people in the U.S. that have tremendous expertise in this area," he states. Maynard was one of the founders of the Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association.

Maynard and his wife, Dawn, have three children. They are avid motorcyclists who have ridden bikes in every state of the union, and by this summer they will have ridden in every province in Canada. ●

EQUINE DOLLAR DAYS

The Country Store
 Howard Lake, MN

Friday, May 29
 Saturday, May 30

\$1/Bag Discount
 All Purina Horse Feeds

5%-10% Discount
 All Outdoor Horse Equipment

- Round pens and horse panels
- Stall fronts and mini bulk feeders
- Much more...

20% Discount
 Inside Horse Supplies

- Shampoos and supplements
- Grooming equipment and halters
- Fly sprays and much more...

Our Mission

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