

MUNSON LAKES Advisor

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They Give Good Service and Treat Me Right

That's how Ron Schmidt sums up his experience with Munson Lakes Nutrition (MLN).

Ron is a fifth generation dairyman whose father, Clarence, started doing business with Munson Feed Company in the 1970s.

"Lowell Schrupp called on us first," says Ron, recalling how, as a boy, he watched the long-time feed salesman drive onto their yard. Thirty years old in 1995, Ron took over Schmidt Dairy when his father died. Lowell retired in 1997, and since then Doug Sawatzke has been the dairy's sales nutritionist.

Schmidt Dairy, located west of Clearwater along Highway 44, is fairly traditional, according to Doug. Ron

manages a Holstein herd of 110 cows with 70 in milk and a total of 280 animals, including steers. Besides that, he raises corn, alfalfa hay, and a little oats.

Ron milks his cows in a circa 1911 stanchion barn. "There are not a whole lot of changes in the way we do things from when I milked with dad," says the now 50-year-old.

From MLN, Ron buys his milk replacer, calf pellets, pellets for milk cows, and protein for steers. "They always have the feed here when I want it, and I appreciate Doug's advice," says the Clearwater dairyman.

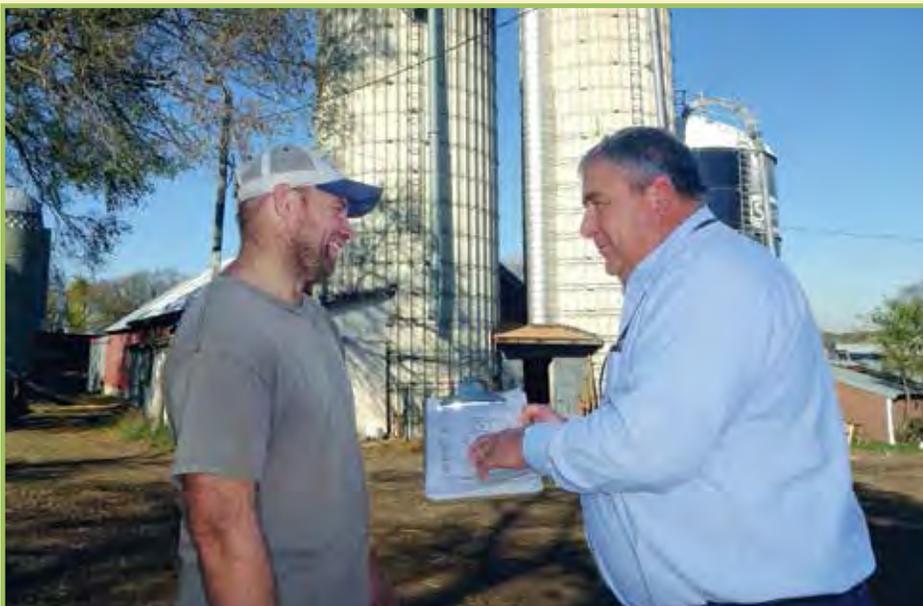
Most recently, Doug looked into the diet Ron was providing his milk

cows to see if he could increase milk production. He sampled all on-farm forages and had their nutrient digestibility analyzed. Then, he set up a ration with supplements to increase total digestibility in the diet. "I've probably seen a five-pound increase, and I expect that to continue to rise," says Ron. "The fresh cows, in particular, have been milking a lot better since this change."

Doug has also consulted on his calf and beef nutrition program. As an example, over a year ago it was suggested to add bicarbonate to the beef pellets. Ron says, "They seem to be eating more and fill out faster since the change was made.

"They (MLN) help me do things that benefit the herd so I get good milk," he adds. "They treat me good."

Editor's Note: Ron Schmidt and his wife Nancy have two children: Alan, 13 and Jackie, 14. Nancy works from home as a financial consultant. ●



Ron Schmidt (left) visiting with sales nutritionist Doug Sawatzke.

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QUALITY

No Regrets as Joel Pettit Completes 33-Year Career

"I've got the best job in the world," says Joel, who has made a medical decision to retire on Dec. 31, 2015, after over three decades as a sales nutritionist. "It's not work," he adds. "I love my job."

Joel grew up in Howard Lake. After graduating high school in 1972, he attended Mankato State College, married his hometown sweetheart Kristen Munson, taught junior high science in Fulda, MN, and worked briefly for Farmland Industries Insurance.

In August of 1982, Joel and Kristen moved back to Howard Lake to be closer to their extended families, and Joel started work with Munson Feed Company.

As he completes his career, Joel shares some thoughts on this 33-year adventure.

By far, the most satisfying part of the job was seeing each of his customers every three weeks. "I was befriended by them," says Joel. "I became part of their family, and they shared their celebrations and their sorrows with me."

Challenging parts of the job included:

- Adapting to change as Munson Feed Company converted from a private company to cooperative ownership in 1996, changing its name to Munson Lakes Nutrition.
- Watching the transfer of farms from one generation to another. "Some

were successful, while it tore other farms apart," remarks Joel.

- The trend toward specialization. "If my customer had a chicken or a pig or a cow, I told him how to feed all three," Joel states. "Today, feed manufacturers employ nutritionists focused specifically on dairy production."

Joel says one of his greatest joys has been working outdoors with God's creation. "I'm a Christian with a strong faith, and having worked with livestock for this many years, I have absolutely no doubt there is a creator," says Joel.

"He is a God of order," Joel continues. "When we do things His way, they work well; when we get out of order, we will have problems." By the same token, says the nutritionist, when you are feeding cattle and something gets out of order, there will be problems.

But Joel views working with livestock, especially at birth, as something other than cold logic. "No matter how much science you apply to that conception, it's not like a tractor where putting gas and new spark plugs in will fix everything," he says. "It's a miracle, and farmers know that."

"I get to work with like-minded people, which has been my joy for over 33 years," he concludes.



Kristen and Joel Pettit with original company sign.

Editor's Note: Kristin and Joel Pettit have raised a daughter and a son to adulthood. Their daughter Valerie (Pettit) Johnson and her husband Nathan have given the Pettits a grandson named Lance, who is 9. Their son David and his wife Leah have given Joel and Kristen two grandchildren: Noah, 4 and Hanna, 1. ●

Adjusting Your Rations to Low Milk Prices

By Dr. Andy Mueller, Field Dairy Nutritionist



With another harvest in the rear-view mirror, it is time to take inventory of what you have to feed and what you can afford to feed.

With milk prices around \$16.00/cwt

and a bumper crop of corn and corn silage, many dairymen will try feeding a high corn silage ration to lower costs and remain profitable. High corn silage/forage rations can be a very cost effective way to make milk. Before you get started on that ration, however, I recommend you and your nutritionist sit down and take inventory of the forages you have available.

Since it is wetter than hay or haylage, you may end up feeding more pounds of corn silage than you were thinking. Also, diet intakes can go up due to the

better fiber digestibility of corn silage, compared to alfalfa feeds.

Your goal should be to maximize the use of the forages that you have on hand without running out before the next crop is harvested and has time to ferment. A 30-day carryover of corn silage is nice, but a 90-day carryover maintains intakes better. It is farther through the fermentation process, and helps maintain production a lot better. Similarly, a 30-day carryover of haylage is much better than no carryover or only a two-week carryover.

Do things differently

With a higher forage/corn silage ration, I recommend you take samples on a more frequent basis than in the past. You want to catch nutrient changes in the forages before they have a chance to affect production. You also want to catch moisture changes sooner, so you feed

the correct ration to your cows every day. *NOTE: If you do not have a Koster tester to dry down your forages, it would be a good investment this year. You cannot afford to have a moisture change cost you milk and profits.*

Another good practice with a higher forage/corn silage ration is to check for mold, yeasts, and mycotoxins. Even low levels of a toxin or mold can result in production or breeding issues, since the cows are consuming a lot more of that feed. On the flip side, if your forages are clean of these items, then you can feel safe lowering the feeding rates of the additives that help with these issues, to help reduce your out-of-pocket ration costs.

Evaluate feed additives

The additives shown to deliver a good return on your investment (ROI) even with low milk prices are Rumensin®,

New! Flannel Shirts with Sherpa Lining

Just in time for Christmas, The Country Store at Howard Lake is stocked with Carhartt® winter clothing, including work bibs, coats, flannel-lined jeans, and sweatshirts. They also carry accessories like hats and gloves.

New this year: Flannel Carhartt Shirts with Sherpa lining!

“Come in while the selection is good,” says Maureen Ogle, sales specialist at The Country Store.

STORE HOURS

MONDAY-FRIDAY 8 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.

SATURDAY 8 A.M. – 3 P.M.

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He Knows All the Shortcuts

For 34 years, Barry Schmieg has manufactured and delivered feed for Munson Feed Company and now for Munson Lakes Nutrition. For the past 10 years, he has driven truck exclusively.

A native of Howard Lake, Barry hauled livestock, grain, and fuel after graduating high school. Thirty-four years ago, he went to work at the Howard Lake mill. “I manufactured feed at first and was a backup driver,” says Barry. “I’ve driven truck full-time for the last 10 years.”

Asked what kept him working at Munson for 34 years, this man-of-few-words says matter-of-factly, “I live three blocks away.”

Barry and his wife, Teresa, raised two daughters and a son.

With responsibility for several seniors at Howard Lake and with Teresa making up a “honey-do” list, Barry says, “I won’t have any trouble keeping busy.” This long-time employee retires on Dec. 31, 2015.

Thank you, Barry, for your hard work and faithfulness. ●



Barry through window of his truck.

buffers, yeast culture, and amino acid balancing. Most of you are probably familiar with the information that shows how Rumensin increases the energy yield of a diet by adjusting the VFA profile in the rumen. You know how buffers help stabilize rumen pH and how yeast culture helps with fiber digestion and intakes, especially in fresh cows, so I won’t go into details on these items.

I hesitate to even refer to amino acid products as feed additives. Having the proper lysine to methionine ratio in a ration has been shown time and time again to increase milk production, component yields, and antidotal health and reproduction. With a low milk price, one way to increase your milk check and profitability is by producing more components and getting those production bonuses. Balancing for amino acids is the most cost effective way to do that while maintaining or even increasing milk production.

When it comes to the multitude of other feed additives that can be fed, I suggest evaluating the product claims. Ask yourself, “What do I hope to gain by

feeding them?” Often, a small change in a feeding or management practice can result in the same health or production effects as feeding an additive, without the added costs. So, before you either cut something out of your ration or add it to the ration, do a little evaluation. Talk with your nutritionist and your veterinarian about what is needed and whether the product offers an acceptable ROI.

Crunch the numbers

Back on the topic of a high corn silage/ forage ration, I would remind you that the most limiting nutrient for milk production is energy. If your forages are low in energy and you plan to feed a lot of them, you will still need to supplement the ration to maintain milk production. If the silage is dry or poorly processed, or if it is low in fiber digestion (NDFd 30 hour < 50%), it may feed like it is lower in energy than the forage test reports. In that case, you should work with your Munson Lakes nutritionist on the best way to supplement your cows to maintain milk production. Alternatively, you may have to settle for

a slightly lower level of production and a lower out-of-pocket feed expense.

Both philosophies can work to maintain profitability, but everyone needs to be on the same page. Don’t just lower the feeding rate of your supplement and hope it helps you remain profitable. Instead consult your nutritionist, veterinarian, and outside feed representative and even your agronomist, and come up with a plan that works for everyone and for the cows.

Put your team to work

With today’s lower milk prices, on-farm profitability can be harder to maintain. Sitting down with your consultant team to evaluate your situation, your goals, and your feed supplies is still the best way to keep the cows milking and your farm profitable. The sooner you do that, the sooner a game plan can be put into action.

If you have any questions on what to feed this year, in view of the lower milk prices—or if you would like to hear our perspective on feeding a higher forage/ corn silage diet, feel free to contact me or any of your Munson Lakes nutrition team members. ●

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Thanks to All Who Contributed

By John Zander, General Manager



As we approach the year's end, I want to thank all of our customers for the trust you have put in us to assist in operating your business. Special thanks to Joel Pettit and Barry Schmiege for their fine service—Joel Pettit for his

33 years as a nutritionist and Barry for his 34 years in millwork and transportation. See their stories on pages 2 and 3.

Growing conditions during 2015 appeared to be excellent, and we were blessed with some pretty good yields at harvest time. With the lower milk prices, I understand these are challenging times for all dairy producers. See Andy Mueller's article on pages 1 and 2 for options that may help you stay profitable.

I would also like to thank Tim Kavanaugh for his time on the Munson Lakes Nutrition Board of Governors. Tim retired Oct. 30 as general manager of Federated Cooperatives. He has served on our board since 2007, when



Munson Feed salesmen Oct. 31, 1982 (L- R) Joel Pettit, Lowell Schrupp, Don Westphal, Myron Smith, Harlan Adickes, and Dick Jacobson. Joel retires Dec. 31, 2015.

Federated joined the ownership of Munson Lakes Nutrition, LLC. His wisdom and direction has been very much appreciated.

I would also like to welcome Mike McMahon, the new CEO at Federated. Mike will fill Tim's position on our Board of Governors.

We look forward to working with you in 2016. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! ●

OUR MISSION

Some things never change—even after 79 years.

THE VALUES THAT SHAPED OUR HERITAGE WILL REMAIN. MUNSON LAKES NUTRITION WILL CONTINUE TO:

- MANUFACTURE A GREAT PRODUCT AT A FAIR PRICE.
- GIVE GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE.
- BASE EVERY DECISION ON FAIRNESS AND DECENCY.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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