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Greener Pastures
Doug Warnock



Feeding low-quality forages to beef cattle

By **DOUG WARNOCK**
For the Capital Press

“Beef cattle are able to survive and even thrive on low-quality feeds,” says Don Llewellyn, Washington State University’s Regional Extension Livestock Specialist located in Kennewick, Wash. “As ruminants, they have the ability to digest fibrous material and get useful nutritional value from it.”

Llewellyn discussed this topic at the Northwest Grazing Conference in Pendleton, Ore., recently. He is the author of EM053E, one of a series of WSU Extension publications on feeding beef cattle. It is well documented that feed is the largest production cost in beef cattle operations and ways in which producers can reduce feed costs will help improve profit. Low-quality forages are generally available at much lower cost than hay, grain and typical forages and their use can help lower feeding costs.

The important part about feeding crop residues, crop aftermath and off-quality hay and other lower quality forages is to know the nutritional value of the feed being used. Then, ensure that any nutritional shortages in that feed are addressed so that desired levels of animal performance can be supported.

Determining the feeding value of a forage is best accomplished through forage analysis and can be done by a forage testing laboratory. When testing forage, it is essential to obtain representative forage samples from the proposed feed and to have the samples tested at a laboratory certified by the National Forage Testing Association. Using an NFTA lab will ensure an accurate test is made utilizing recognized testing procedures.

There can be a significant difference in feed quality depending on the timing of the harvest and condition of the forage, so the samples taken need to be representative of the particular lot of forage. It is recommended that a minimum of 20 core samples per lot be collected from as many areas of the stack as possible. Samples should be placed in a plastic bag and delivered to the laboratory as soon as is practical. Core sampling tools are often available at extension offices. Extension educators can provide information on sampling forage and contacting testing laboratories. Standing forage can be sampled and tested as well. The suggested procedure is to take at least 20 clippings per pasture, collected in a grid pattern.

Protein is commonly the first limiting nutrient. A general rule is to provide supplemental protein when the crude protein content of the forage to be used is less than 7 percent. There are a number of protein-rich feeds that can be used as supplements. Alfalfa hay, corn distillers grains, canola, soybean and cottonseed meal are just a few of the feeds used to bolster the protein of ruminants’ diets.

The important thing is to determine the amount of protein, energy and other nutrients needed to support the expected level of production. This will vary according to the age, size, condition and production targets of the specific animals. An excellent resource on nutritive requirements is Nutritive Requirements of Beef Cattle, a publication from the National Research Council, which can be ordered online.

Low-quality forages can be a significant source of nutrition, if managed effectively. Successful use of these forages depends on determining the nutrient value of the feed and filling any nutrient deficiencies that may exist. More detailed information may be found in Llewellyn’s publication.

Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he consults and writes on grazing management. He can be contacted at dwarnockgreenerpastures@gmail.com.

Idaho dairy industry elevates worker safety, training

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

SUN VALLEY, Idaho — Training a largely inexperienced, non-English-speaking workforce on Idaho’s dairies for the ultimate goal of worker safety has become a priority for both dairymen and the processors they supply.

“Unfortunately, it took a fatality on a dairy to bring it to the table,” Rick Naerebout, director of operations for the Idaho Dairymen’s Association, said during the Idaho Milk Processors Association annual conference last week.

That tragedy occurred in February 2016, when worker Ruperto Vazquez-Carrera, 37, drowned in a waste pond after mistakenly driving a feed truck into it in pre-dawn hours under flooded conditions.

IDA quickly responded to prevent future tragedies by engaging with experts in worker safety and training to figure out “how to get our arms around” the issue of comprehensive training, Naerebout said.

“We realized we have an opportunity to do more than check a box on safety” and be proactive instead of reactive, he said.

The worker training and safety program has been in development for more than



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

David Douphrate, assistant professor of epidemiology, human genetics and environmental sciences at the University of Texas, answers questions during a panel on a new worker training program for Idaho’s dairy industry during the Idaho Milk Processors Association annual conference. Robert Hagevoort, extension dairy specialist at New Mexico State University, looks on.

a year, and IDA has hired a full-time worker training and safety specialist to lead it. The program rolled out this week, starting at dairies owned by IDA board members.

Processors are collaborating in the program and sharing in the cost, said Daragh Maccabee, senior vice president of procurement and dairy economics for Glanbia Nutritionals.

Processors met with IDA in April 2016 to discuss a path forward, wanting to participate in a meaningful way, he said.

While there are already good practices in place, the event — which drew the attention of OSHA, the United Farm Workers of America and the media — highlighted a need for more structure. The primary objective of the program is to provide a safe work environment, he said.

“People safety is our No. 1 priority,” and Glanbia wants to support the producer community in a real way, he said.

“As an industry, we need to be able to show to the world we are responsible,” he said.

IDA contracted with worker safety and training experts — David Douphrate, assistant professor of epidemiology, human genetics and environmental sciences at the University of Texas, and Robert Hagevoort, extension dairy specialist at New Mexico State University — to develop a program.

Hagevoort said the U.S. dairy industry is experiencing growing pains, with the number of operations decreasing and herd size increasing, driven by economies of scale. It is also

moving to automation, with a need for highly skilled workers.

Employment on dairies is “not based on skill but on willingness,” resulting in a lot of foreign workers unfamiliar with large animals. And it’s a population challenged by reading comprehension and retention, he said.

Training has to be consistent, repetitive and comprehensive and include both classroom and live training with animals. In addition to the “what,” the “why” of safety issues and animal handling must be explained, he said.

Idaho’s consortium can be beneficial in developing and evaluating materials and training the trainers of employees, he said.

Douphrate agreed, saying the focus needs to be on safety leadership and management.

“You can’t be everywhere on the farm, you have to delegate and need to equip supervisors,” he said.

They need to be able to effectively train workers and evaluate whether that training is being retained and workers are applying what they learned, he said.

“We want a proactive approach to address injuries and fatalities before they happen,” he said.

Dairy research facility efforts make headway

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

SUN VALLEY, Idaho — The effort to establish a world-class, dairy-centric research center in south-central Idaho to focus on sustainability from farm to fork is gaining ground.

With its sights set on the Magic Valley, the University of Idaho has completed a feasibility study and secured two-thirds of the \$45 million needed to make the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment a reality.

Efforts are “moving forward quite rapidly,” Michael Parrella, dean of UI College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, said during the recent Idaho Milk Processors Association annual conference.

“This is still at an early stage, but I do expect to make significant advances on all fronts in the next few months,” he said.

CAFÉ will be a transformational facility, for the university and partnering institutions, the dairy and food processing industries, the surrounding communities and Idaho citizens. It will support the sustainability of key agricultural industries that are vital to the expanding economy of the state, he said.

It will also have a huge educational and training component that will expand opportunities for students, workers and food processors. It is beyond anything the university or the state itself has ever done, he said.

“We’re taking this very seriously,” he said.

The state Legislature has



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Michael Parrella, dean of the University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, gives an update on a planned state-of-the-art research facility focused on sustainable animal agriculture during the Idaho Milk Processors Association annual conference in Sun Valley.

approved \$15 million for the planned 2,000-cow, 1,000-acre facility. The university has committed \$15 million and is seeking funding from partners for the remaining \$15 million.

“We need to do this. We need to do it together,” he told members of the dairy industry.

“It will require unprecedented collaboration across the university, Legislature, stakeholders and community partners, and we are working on all fronts to make this a truly transformational facility,” he said.

Research done at the facility will be unique to dairy operations in Idaho, both in size and scope, taking in the environmental and economic constraints. Research in-

forms rules and regulations — as well as lawsuits, such as the ones brought against dairies in Yakima, Wash. Research on sustainability done elsewhere can’t be applied to Idaho operations, he said.

“We really are producing milk in the desert,” he said.

Research at the facility will focus on water use — its efficiency, discharge, movement and recycling — as well as nutrient management plans, water-treatment systems, anaerobic digesters and robotic milking systems. It will be realistic studies that directly apply to Idaho operations, he said.

There are real concerns here about the dairy industry in general, presenting challenges from a public perception perspective. This facility

is going to help, giving the public a view into the complete world of dairy, from farm to fork. It will show that dairy can be sustainable, healthy, authentic, clean, clear and local, he said.

The feasibility study determined that building the facility from scratch would be more viable than retrofitting an existing dairy, and the new facility is to be near Twin Falls in a strong partnership with the College of Southern Idaho.

“My hope is we’re starting to zero in on where that’s going to be,” Parrella said.

Following his presentation, Parrella told Capital Press the university is aware of local concerns that have already been voiced about the facility.

“We have to be able to address those issues, and we expect more pushback,” he said.

But the facility is going to address exactly the issues people complain about and accelerate the research on sustainability the university is already doing, he said.

The benefits of the facility are much broader than the dairy industry. It will benefit southern Idaho as well through its economic impact, research in food processing and expanded educational and workforce training opportunities, he said.

“In addition, by partnering with other universities as well as with regional high schools, we hope to impact the number of high school students going on to college in southern Idaho,” he said.

Montana wildlife reserve buys 46,000-acre ranch

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A sprawling central Montana nature reserve has purchased a 46,000-acre ranch bordering a federal refuge as it advances toward its goal of establishing a Connecticut-sized park where bison and other wildlife can roam freely.

The American Prairie Reserve announced last week it had purchased the Two Crow Ranch about an hour north of Lewistown for an undisclosed sum.

The deal brings the amount of land under the group’s control to more than 399,000 acres. That includes private and leased land to the north and south of the Missouri River.

Cattle grazing will continue at the Two Crow Ranch for at least the 18 months, Reserve President Sean Garrity said. There will be public access for camping, biking, horseback riding and other recreational activities, he said.

The Two Crow Ranch borders the 1.1 million-acre Charles M. Russel National Wildlife Refuge, which includes Fort Peck Reservoir.

Since 2001, the Bozeman-based American Prairie Reserve has raised more than \$100 million to pursue its goal of stitching together millions of acres of contiguous public and private land to create a vast wildlife preserve.

Some surrounding landowners have raised objections that the reserve is taking land out of food production and altering the rural, agriculture-based economies of surrounding areas of central Montana.

Cheese eclipses butter at CME; milk up 1.9 percent

By **LEE MIELKE**
For the Capital Press

Cash cheese prices rode the roller coaster higher last week and overshadowed butter. First, the block cheddar dipped to \$1.7250 per pound Tuesday, then rallied and closed Friday at \$1.7550, up 1 1/4-cents on the week but 11 cents below a year ago.

They slipped 1 1/4-cents Monday and 2 1/4-cents Tuesday, dipping to \$1.72, as traders anticipated the afternoon’s July Cold Storage report.

The barrels finished Friday at \$1.75, up 16 1/4-cents on the week, the highest since November 2016, but 11 1/2-cents below a year ago. The spread shrank to just a half-cent.

The barrels gained a pen-

Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



ny Monday, topping the blocks for the first time since March 15, then dropped 4 cents Tuesday, with 23 loads trading hands, and fell to \$1.72, matching the blocks.

Milk availability varies in the Midwest, according to Dairy Market News. Some cheese manufacturers report getting few to no spot milk offers. Others maintain that spot milk, although no longer discounted, is still available.

Many report that cheese demand has picked up. Cheese production is steady to a bit slower. Barrel inventories are long. Cheese market tones have slightly improved but they remain uncertain.

Milk continues to be plentiful in the West and more cheese is being made. Demand is fair, but continues to lag production. International interest continues to be low. Supplies are long, but holding relatively steady.

Cash butter continued its meltdown last week and a lot of product headed to the CME. It closed the week 3 3/4-cents lower, at \$2.6450 per pound, but 45 1/2-cents above a year ago when it was on its way to the year’s low point of \$1.76 in October. Sixty-three cars traded hands last week, 34 on Wednesday alone.

Monday’s trading took the butter down 1 3/4-cents and Tuesday’s meltdown was 5 3/4-cents, to \$2.57, lowest price since June 19.

DMN says retail and food service orders for butter have

maintained consistency.

Manufacturers continue to report that sales are at least slightly higher than 2016. As schools are nearing their re-opening, food service expectations are strong for the near term. International interests are prevalent. Butter output is steady.

Western butter production is steady. Cream volumes moving into churns are more than sufficient.

Cash Grade A nonfat dry milk finished Friday at 83 1/4-cents per pound, down 1 3/4-cents on the week and 2 1/2-cents below a year ago.

The powder was steady Monday but inched a half-cent lower Tuesday, slipping to 82 3/4-cents per pound.

July milk up

Preliminary USDA data shows July milk output in

the top 23 producing states at 17.2 billion pounds, up 1.9 percent from June 2016. Revisions added 5 million pounds to the original June estimate, now put at 16.9 billion pounds, up 1.7 percent from a year ago.

July milk cow numbers totaled 8.73 million head, down 1,000 head from June but 72,000 more than a year ago. Output per cow averaged 1,969 pounds, up 21 pounds from a year ago.

California output, while below a year ago for the sixth consecutive month, strengthened some. The nation’s No. 1 producer was down just 0.2 percent, due to 13,000 fewer cows. Output per cow was up 10 pounds. Wisconsin was up 0.7 percent on a 15-pound gain per cow while cow numbers were unchanged.