By Julie Berry

Forage Management

This month's The Manager from PRO-DAIRY brings together strategies to manage for forage yield and variability.

Managing through forage variability

This issue of The Manager provides pro-active strategies to manage forage shortfalls and quality issues caused by the unpredictable weather in 2011. It also marks a change in The Manager with the retirement of Eleanor Jacobs, and my new role as communications manager for PRO-DAIRY.

PRO-DAIRY also now has a new monthly e-newsletter called e-LEADER to feature and provide regular updates about PRO-DAIRY programs. Click the "Sign Up for the e-Newsletter" button on PRO-DAIRY's main page at: http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/.

Also, mark your calendars for these upcoming programs:

NEDPA Conference
March 7-8
Syracuse, NY

A sampling of this year's topics and speakers includes:

- The world in chaos…… Impact on U.S. agriculture and the dairy industry, Richard Brock, President, Brock Associates;
- Industry growth in Wisconsin – role of the producer in public education and industry leadership, John Pagel, Pagel's Ponderosa Dairy;
- Milk fat and human health – separating fats from fiction, Dale Bauman, Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor, Cornell University;
- Impact of new reproductive technologies on herd improvement and the dynamics of replacement programs, Kent Weigel, Dairy Science Professor and Chair, University of Wisconsin-Madison;
- Managing multiple sites – use of activity based accounting systems in management, Calvin Moody, Brooksco Dairy, LLC;
- Technology in the 21st century: Making safe, affordable, and abundant food a global reality, Jeff Simmons, President, Elanco Animal Health.

Got Manure? Enhancing Environmental and Economic Sustainability
March 27-28, 2012, Conference
March 29, 2012, Optional Digester Tours
Syracuse-Liverpool, NY

Registration is now open for the Got Manure? Enhancing Environmental and Economic Sustainability national conference hosted by PRO-DAIRY, AgSTAR, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service. Some of this year's topics include:

- Integrated manure management system planning;
- Primary, secondary and tertiary manure treatment options;
- Anaerobic digestion system performance;
- Enhancing biogas quality, quantity, and utilization;
- Co-digestion;
- Economics and policies related to anaerobic digestion systems;
- Experiences with anaerobic digestion and other systems

Register online at: http://www.epa.gov/agstar/news-events/events/conference12_reg.html.

Herd Health and Nutrition Conference
April 3, Syracuse, NY
April 5, West Lebanon, NH

Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance (NEAFA) and PRO-DAIRY are partnering to offer the Herd

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FYI

■ Julie Berry is the new communications manager and editor of The Manager for PRO-DAIRY. Reach her at 315.232.2771. Email: jrb7@cornell.edu.

The Manager, a special section prepared by PRO-DAIRY specialists, is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health and appears in *Eastern DairyBusiness* four times a year. In keeping with the PRO-DAIRY mission, The Manager helps strengthen the management skills of dairy producers and increase the profitability of the dairy industry. PRO-DAIRY, an educational program begun in 1988, is a joint venture of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Northeast agriservice organizations. For reprints of PRO-DAIRY's The Manager, contact Heather Howland, 272 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Phone: 607. 255.4478 Email: hh96@cornell.edu

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Health and Nutrition Conference on April 3 in Syracuse, NY and on April 5 in West Lebanon, NH. Speakers and topics include Dr. Nina Von Keyserlingk from the University of British Columbia on "Cow Comfort Assessment", Dr. Heather Dann from Miner Institute on "Fresh Cow Nutrition and Management", Dr. Bill Weiss from The Ohio State University on "New Research in Macro- and Micro-mineral Nutrition", and Dr. Trevor Devries from the University of Guelph on "New Concepts in Feeding Dairy Heifers". Visit the PRO-DAIRY website at www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy or the NEAFA website at www.northeastalliance.org for more information and registration information. ❐

Feeding Strategies for 2012
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development, mycotoxins both in silages and grains, and abnormally fermented silages. As described in a separate article in this section, these can impact cow performance and health. We also anticipate that spoilage yeasts may also become an issue when silos start to warm up in the spring, which can contribute to milk fat issues.

7) Look for value buys in the ingredient marketplace – Much can be gained (and lost) through feed purchasing/contracting decisions. Software tools are now available to help identify which feeds are relatively better (or poorer) buys based upon their nutrient content and the value of these nutrients in the feed marketplace. These tools are not ration balancers, but they can help steer the discussion of which feeds to incorporate or to bring to the farm as separate commodities. One such tool is called Sesame, which was developed by Dr. Normand St. Pierre from The Ohio State University, and is available at www.sesamesoft.com. This program uses all available feeds in a given marketplace to calculate the value of energy and nutrients (e.g., rumen degradable protein and digestible rumen undegradable protein) and then calculates predicted values of feeds for users to compare to actual market prices. If the predicted value is higher than the actual price, then the feed is a comparatively good buy. If the predicted value is lower than the actual price, then the feed is a relatively poor buy. Although the software program is available for purchase at the website above, we recommend that those interested in looking further at this consider subscribing, for a nominal fee, to a report of feed values by region that is compiled by Dr. Joanne Knapp from Fox Hollow Consulting. More information on this report is available at: http://www.foxhollowllc.com/FHC/Feed_Prices.html

In summary, 2012 is going to be a challenge for forage and nutrition programs for many herds, but there are strategies to work through them. Make sure to work with a nutritionist who can help sort through options and who also sees what is/is not working on other farms. Finally, be ready to go when it comes time to get the 2012 crops into the ground! ❐

Identifying and dealing with molds and mycotoxins in feeds
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How do molds and mycotoxins cause these problems? There are 4 primary methods in ruminant animals. These are:

- Changes in nutrient content, absorption and metabolism of nutrients.
- Alteration of rumen microbial activity.
- Changes in endocrine/neuroendocrine function.
- Suppression of the immune system.

What strategies can be used to lower the impact of molds and mycotoxins in dairy herds? The following section assumes that other factors were checked and that molds and/or mycotoxins are still a suspected problem. Strategies include:

- Consider feeding less of the suspect feed. In some cases, it may be advisable to stop using this feed.
- Physically remove and discard any feeds with visible mold growth.
- If possible, don't use any of the suspect feed in rations for close-up dry cows or early lactation cows.
- Consider adding a mold inhibitor to the TMR (total mixed ration). These are usually acid-based preservatives. They will not decrease the molds or mycotoxins already present in the feed. However, they can slow or inhibit any additional mold growth from the time the feed is mixed until it is consumed.
- Consider adding one of the commercial flow agents or feed additives that are marketed to help with mycotoxin problems.
  - Data on their effectiveness is limited.
  - Many of these have only been tested against aflatoxin.
  - FDA does not approve the addition of these for mycotoxin control.
  - A large number of products are on the market.
  - It is difficult to predict which product will work in a specific situation – most, if not all, of them seem to work in at least some situations
  - You may need to try more than one product.
- If you do add a flow agent or other feed additive, feed it for 2 to 3 weeks. Changes in feed intake or manure consistency may be the first index that it is working.

How to determine if I have mycotoxin contamination of feeds?

- Most commercial forage testing laboratories have the capability to screen feeds for mycotoxins.
- Remember, hundreds of mycotoxins occur in nature, but most labs only screen for the most common ones.
- Be sure to follow the specific guidelines for sample collection and handling during shipping as improper handling of samples may give false results.
- For more information on sample collection and handling, consult your forage lab. General guidelines are available online at the PRO-DAIRY website: www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy. Select "Feed Fact Sheets and Worksheets." ❐