

Re-evaluate your Cow's Summertime Feeding Program

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With milk prices and feed costs at all time highs, it is more important than ever to fine-tune your cow's feeding program. By taking time to fine-tune your cows' feeding program, your cows should be able to milk well while keeping feed costs in line. To accomplish these goals:

- 1** Test forages you are currently feeding and have your nutritionist balance a summertime ration for your cows. This year the early spring weather may have cooperated so that you could harvest higher quality forages than last year. Feeding these higher quality forages may decrease the protein content and maybe the amount of grain you need to feed. Both of these changes can result in saving feed dollars.
- 2** Reevaluate the feedstuffs in your cows' grain mix. Substitution of different by-products or grains may decrease or hold steady the cost of the grain mix while at the same time maintaining production.
- 3** Make sure your cows' ration is balanced for the summertime. Cows eat less during the summer. Also, the mineral content of the diet needs to be modified slightly to accommodate the losses of sodium and potassium through sweating. At the same time, it is imperative that adequate amounts of fiber to stimulate cud chewing be included in the diet.
- 4** Reevaluate your feedbunk management for the hot weather. During hot weather, feed heats up in the bunk faster than during the colder months. Thus, cows need to be fed more often. Also, cows eat a larger percentage of their feed overnight when the temperature generally decreases, Thus, cows should be fed a higher percentage of their feed at the evening feeding. Shade, sprinklers, and fans over the feedbunk can help stimulate intake. But overall remember that cows need feed close by so they will eat as much as possible. Getting cows to eat as much as possible becomes a bigger challenge during the summer.

Hopefully, by evaluating and fine-tuning your cows' ration you will be able to get your cows to milk well and be able to feed them economically this summer.