



ACTISAF AND SAFMANNAN SUPPORT HIGH-PERFORMING HOLSTEIN HERD

The transition between winter and spring grazing, and the reverse in the autumn as cows are housed again, can cause dietary upset in even the best managed and well-bred dairy herds. But with the right management, and with careful ration management, milking cows can make it through these times relatively problem-free.

Clayton Coulter, who owns Portvale Holsteins in Co Monaghan, Ireland, keeps 60 pedigree Holsteins, which are milked twice daily. His grazing herd averages 10,400 litres - with some cows doing over 13,000 litres - at 3.31 per cent protein and 3.9 per cent butterfat.

The herd is typically fed up to 12kg of compound feed/head/day and is grazed over the spring, summer and autumn, with winter rations being based on good quality round bale silage.

The majority of the Portvale herd calves in February and March, and fertility is good, with a calving index of 398. Clayton relies on proactive management and careful breeding selection to keep his herd running productively and efficiently and his cows' performance speaks to that.

"Our heifers calve typically at 21-22 months of age, and they tend to stay in the milking herd longer than average. For example, we currently have a seventh lactation cow producing 54 litres a day, having last calved in January!"

In May 2017 Clayton noticed a change in his herd and looked to what the cows were eating for answers. "We started seeing a lot of loose, bubbly dung in our cows, which was concerning, so I spoke to my feed supplier, Corby Rock Mill, to see whether they could help. They suggested that we were probably seeing symptoms of sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA) and that we should consider adding Actisaf live yeast to our feed to help improve rumen performance. Once we added it into our rations, dung consistency improved rapidly and the cows just seem more content."

Soon after this, Actisaf and Safmannan - a premium yeast fraction - were also added into the calf feeding regime at the farm and Clayton has noticed a marked improvement in calf performance. "The calves have responded really well to the products. We've had no digestive upsets and their growth rates have improved since adding them to our calves' diets."

Leslie Quinn of Corby Rock Mill is convinced that Actisaf helps improve herd performance and well-being. "We've tried a lot of yeasts, but none of them come near Actisaf for performance. I recommend it to everyone who wants healthy and productive herds!"

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TOP TIPS FOR AUTUMN FEEDING

Summer 2018 has been a difficult season for grass growth, resulting in most farmers having less silage in store for next winter than they'd like, with many having to tap into winter stocks already to make up for the lack of grazing. Technical Manager for Phileo Lesaffre Animal Care in the UK & Ireland and CowSignals® Master Trainer James Ambrose details some nutritional and management areas that dairy farmers need to be mindful of this autumn to help manage the challenges that have arisen from the dry summer.

Know what you have...

Measure silage clamps and count the number of silage bales in the yard and see how much good quality straw you can get hold of. Contact your local feed advisor to assist you with measuring silage pits and estimating silage quantity and preparing autumn and winter feeding plans for your farm if needed. Growing a third cut of silage will be critical for many farms, and some stock may need to be housed now to allow third cuts to grow.

Know what you need...

To make up for current deficits in silage stocks, straw-based diets can form a significant portion of winter diets in these circumstances if sufficient straw is available. Alternative sources of forage for the autumn are fast-growing grasses, or forage rape or kale that have been planted in stubbles and, depending on the

individual crop, these can be used for baling, pitting, or extending the grazing season.

Get your forage analysed...

Do not ignore carrying out this task this year as knowing the quality of forage in the yard is as important as having quantity in the yard.

Ensure your mixer wagon is serviced

Have your diet feeder serviced over the coming months if it has not been serviced already and ensure that all knives are sharp and installed properly. If a diet feeder is incapable of chopping straw, then straw can be pre-chopped using a straw chopper or forage harvester. Straw should be ideally chopped to 2-4" long (muzzle width of the animal).

Watch out for dry rations...

Water may need to be added to the diet feeder mix in order to keep the mix moist and minimise sorting if drier silages are being fed with straw and concentrate. Aim for 45% dry matter in the overall mix. Adding molasses to drier diets will aid against sorting and increase palatability but be careful not to overfeed it as it is high in sugar.

Feed the right feed to the right animals...

High quality grass silage, whole crop cereals and maize silage

should be prioritised for milking cows, with lower quality grass silage being fed to dry cows once they are in the correct condition score at drying off. However, if your fodder budget shows a serious deficit and this is not filled by winter, a proportion of the dry cow and young stock diets can be supplemented with either whole crop or maize silage, along with grass silage, and balanced accordingly. Housed young stock will do well on a straw-based diet with a mix of concentrates and a minimal amount of silage so long as it is mixed and fed correctly.

Regardless of whether these animals need to be housed or not now, straw- and concentrate-based diets for young stock can significantly save on silage demand through the winter, while still maintaining growth rates, and high straw diets also work well for dry cows, further reducing the demand on silage.

Think about which animals you keep if forage stocks are low

If you simply haven't got enough silage and straw, and can't get more, then the next step is to decide how many animals will be retained through the winter. Cull cows that are not in calf, any that are lame, have high SCC and repeat mastitis offenders. This will optimise overall herd health and improve returns, whilst reducing forage requirements and feed costs. Having done all of this, if a major fodder deficit still exists, selling off productive milking cows or young stock will be a last resort.

Manage rumen function to avoid issues with acidosis...

Be extremely alert to the risk of acidosis when feeding higher levels of concentrate this autumn, particularly over the coming weeks when lush and leafy grass swards may come back into the diet. Similarly, as herds transition on to winter diets this can further challenge rumen function. Sub-acute rumen acidosis will

reduce intakes, milk solids yield and fertility and can result in inflammation and lameness, whilst in its clinical form acidosis can kill animals. The following tips will help you best manage the risk of acidosis in your herd:

- Feed a maximum of 8 kg of concentrate through the parlour. If more is required, it should be fed through an out of parlour feeder or via head feed. Do not feed more than 50% concentrate in total in the diet.
- Make changes to the diet slowly and feed concentrates as consistently as possible. Feeding higher starch rations because of higher cereal levels in feed will require careful feed management and increased attention to detail. Work with your feed advisor on purchasing the best compound feed formulation for your herd's individual circumstances
- Observe cow signals for signs of acidosis, such as loose dung with gas bubbles and undigested fibres and grains visible. Other warning signs include poor rumen fill and empty looking cows, cud balls in collecting yards, poor cudding rates, and cows losing body condition.
- Feeding Actisaf live yeast will significantly reduce the risk of acidosis this autumn and simultaneously increase the feed conversion efficiency of your herd, helping them to produce more milk solids from the same amount of feed.

Actisaf is the only live yeast scientifically proven to reduce lactic acid levels in the rumen (which accumulates and causes acidosis), and published research in the Journal of Dairy Science has shown it to lower lactic acid levels to a greater extent than sodium bicarbonate. It also increases fibre digestion in the rumen, unlocking more energy from silages and increasing herd performance.



Reduce the risk of acidosis under current conditions with Actisaf Sc 47 live yeast

Feeding high concentrate and low forage diets, due to a lack of grass or silage in diets, can cause acidosis in livestock and significantly reduce feed intakes, negatively impacting on milk solids yield, fertility and live weight gain.

Feeding Actisaf Sc 47 live yeast to your livestock under current conditions will:

- Significantly reduce the risk of acidosis and resulting poor performance
- Reduce the upset & reduced performance associated with regular changes in dietary ingredients and /or forages
- Increase feed efficiency by releasing more energy from forages
- Reduce the negative effects of heat and humidity stress
- Support milk solids yield and live weight gain where rumen function is seriously challenged

Actisaf can be incorporated into your feed by your feed mill and can also be supplied as a farm pack for inclusion into diet feeders.

Find out more at
www.phileo-lesaffre.com

ActiSaf



ACTISAF SUPPORTS RUMEN PERFORMANCE

The autumn transition from grazed grass to silage can result in digestive upset, as cows get used to a new diet, but this can be mitigated by careful ration formulation and management through the period.

Someone who has encountered problems around housing in the autumn is Joe McArdle of Co Monaghan, Ireland, with his 135-strong herd of Meuse Rhine Issel (MRI or "Rotbunt") cattle.

Whilst not a common breed, the MRI is dual-purpose, originating from Germany and the Netherlands, and known for its high-quality milk, which Joe's herd demonstrates by delivering annual average milk solids of 4.55 per cent butterfat 3.7 per cent protein. What's more, this is not at the expense of milk production, with the herd delivering an average yield of 6,000 litres from a pasture-based system.

As well as great production, the fertility of the herd is also excellent, and a point of pride for Joe. "This year we had 125 cows serviced using AI in 3 weeks and after just one serve, 90 of them were in calf! I was really pleased about that," he explained.

After the herd calves in spring, the cows are put out to pasture for grazing over the summer, before being housed indoors over the winter months.

"Last autumn during the transition from grazing to silage, we encountered some trouble," Joe said. "The cows' dung became the consistency of toothpaste, they were mopey and dull in the eye. Soon after that we started seeing compacted rumens in several of them and, regrettably, we eventually lost two cows."

Joe turned to local veterinarian Paddy McGinn for advice. Paddy suggested the addition of Actisaf live yeast to the diet at the time of housing to improve the herd's rumen function and to generally benefit the cows during what can be a stressful period. Within a few days of adding Actisaf to the diet, Paddy and Joe saw positive changes within the herd.

"We started using it immediately because of the situation we were in, we couldn't afford to lose another cow. The dung consistency improved quickly and the cows really brightened up, it really was impressive. We'll definitely continue to use Actisaf in the autumn diets - it really saved us!"

Warehouse

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