

Don't Miss the Opportunity



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Today's economic environment may cause dairy producers to look for ways to cut costs.

When hard financial times came and the price of commodities drove the cost of dairy rations up, dairy producers had no other alternatives but to take ingredients out of the ration. At this point, nutritionists have to be able to identify the real feeding cost and help the dairyman to find the equilibrium between ration cost and animal performance. The change of a ration in the dairy business has to be positively correlated with animal performance, animal health, and business profitability. Feed costs represent 45% to 60% of the

total cost of milk production. Therefore, the key to maximizing dairy farm profitability and still maintaining adequate nutrient levels is managing feed costs carefully.

One of the biggest mistakes that a dairyman can make is to cut back or remove ingredients such as the vitamin mineral package from the ration. Reducing or removing these ingredients will not immediately affect the cow's health and production levels. However, after a few months without proper vitamin and mineral nutrition, producers begin to see an increase

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in metabolic diseases, foot problems, a weakened immune system and a decrease in reproduction performance. It is very important to consider that cows face different environmental challenges in their im-

mune system during lactation. Those challenges may be even worse as we cut those nutrients from the ration. At this point, it is far more important and cost-effective to promote good animal health by maintaining a healthy immune system than it is to spend money to treat diseases caused by a lower plane of nutrition. Maintaining a healthy immune system is one of the dairy producer's most economically rewarding management tools to consider in today's economic climate.

As a nutritionist, I would never recommend skimping on good quality nutrition as a solution to save money. Cost cutting measures are required at this time, however keeping animals healthy and physically prepared to efficiently perform is the key. Don't miss the opportunity to cash in when milk prices rebound, and believe me, those good times are coming soon, so be prepared!

