

Topic of the Month

20:20

Usually around this time of year, I like to write about the inadequacies of feeding two quarts of 20:20 milk replacer twice a day. I went to a meeting last month that presented some figures that I thought really hammered home the point.

The numbers, of course, refer to the protein and fat content. A 20:20 replacer is 20% protein, 20% fat. By contrast, Holstein milk averages 27% protein, 30% fat. When calculated after mixing, whole milk contains 50% more protein and 67% more fat on a solids basis.

Furthermore, a Holstein calf allowed to nurse its mother will eat roughly ten times a day and consume 20% of its body weight in milk. This amounts to about two gallons for an 85 lb. calf. So not only is the calf on two quarts twice daily of 20:20 milk replacer getting an inferior product- it is also receiving half the volume that it should.

That is assuming thermoneutral temperatures. When it is colder, the calves require more.

There has also been recent research indicating that while younger calves are the most efficient at using protein, previous estimates of their protein use efficiency were too high. As a result, published NRC recommendations for protein requirements are likely too low. A more appropriate protein level in a milk replacer would be 28%. So while milk replacer came about as a cheaper alternative to avoid feeding saleable milk to calves, the calves end up paying the price.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of November 30, 2019

Corn	\$3.71/bu
Soybean Meal	\$290.90/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$20.11/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$121.20/cwt

Practice News & Upcoming Events

- We have a truck for sale. There is a blue Ford Ranger with a cap on the back. It will not pass inspection but would make a good farm truck. If interested, please call the office for details and pricing.

In The News

- According to a recent article published by CNN, a Russian dairy farm has begun experimenting with the use of Virtual Reality technology in cattle. The farm, outside of Moscow, has developed VR goggles that fit on a cow's head and the images they display are of a sunny, summertime field. The idea is to improve the cow's mood to increase milk production and quality. There has been no data about whether or not production improved but the article notes that a first test showed decreased anxiety and improved mood in the cattle.
- Dr. Stephen Hahn has been nominated to become the new commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration. During questioning, Dr. Hahn stated that if he takes over leadership of the FDA, he would immediately investigate deceptive labeling practices around plant-based dairy competitors and commit to enforcing the labeling standards already in place, but largely ignored, at FDA.
- National Milk Producers Federation reports that "declining dairy" is a myth. While fluid milk consumption may be down in a competitive beverage market, per capita consumption of dairy products last year was at its highest level since 1962, averaging 646 pounds per person.
- Dean Foods, which is America's largest milk producer, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November. They are in advanced discussions with DFA, which will likely purchase the 94 year old company.