

Topic of the Month

The Devil in the Details

Burger King released an advertisement last month announcing an initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cattle by feeding lemongrass. The ad features a kid dressed like a cowboy with a guitar singing about cows and their methane production. It also includes footage designed to look like the singer is passing through a cow's intestine. I found the commercial to be as distasteful as it was inaccurate. I prefer to take my cues from actual science.

Here's some things they are not telling you. We have known for years that cattle emissions are impacted by their diet. That's why farmers make nutrient management plans to protect things like the Chesapeake Bay watershed by limiting the amount of certain nutrients they feed to their cows and spreading manure according to their plan.

Farmers have also begun using things like methane digesters to reduce their environmental impact.

Statistics can be spun lots of different ways, but regardless of how the percentage of greenhouse gas emissions is stated, it is indisputable that greenhouse gas production per unit of beef, milk, or pork produced in the US has dropped tremendously since the EPA has been keeping data. An industry that is a tremendous producer of GHG that you are less likely to hear about is cellular phones (both manufacturing and usage).

Finally, it is worth noting that the information in the commercial stated BK's change would reduce their GHG emissions by 33%. This is based on a Mexican study. Two other studies were also done. One is under review and the other has not been written yet. However, one of the researchers has been very forthcoming that their study did not find such a high reduction. Those are all details that are kind of important.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of July 31, 2020

Corn	\$3.16/bu
Soybean Meal	\$289.30/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$21.03/cwt (July)
Beef (Live cattle)	\$102.83/cwt

Practice News

- The 120th annual Somerset County Fair will be held August 20-29, 2020. **Please call the office now to schedule if you have animals to examine for the fair. We may not be able to meet last minute requests for health charts.**
- Dr. Charles Gardner, a veterinarian, has recently received a degree in clinical counseling. Recognizing the current severe economic depression among dairy farmers, and accompanying emotional distress and anxiety, he has made himself available to any dairy producers who would like to talk. The Center for Dairy Excellence will cover the cost of at least one session, which could be by Zoom meeting or phone. Call the office for more information.
- Direct relief payments are available to dairy producers through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Payments are eligible for milk production and dumped milk, as well as cull cows, bull calves, steers, and dairy heifers sold for beef. The application process opened on May 26 and applications will be accepted through August 28. You must apply through the local FSA office.
- We have discontinued use of the answering service for after-hours calls. Calls to the office phone outside of normal business hours will be forwarded to the phone of the veterinarian on call.
- The Center for Dairy Excellence is constantly updating information and resources available to dairy producers during this pandemic. The CDE can also be contacted at 717-346-0849 or you can visit online at centerfordairyexcellence.org/covid-19-farm-resources/.