

SOUTH WALES DAIRY HERD FEEDING TRIAL SHOWS BENEFIT OF YEAST CULTURE

A six week winter feeding trial run with a dairy herd in South Wales has highlighted the value of proven yeast cultures in improving rumen function. Both milk yield and quality were boosted in the feeding study at a net financial benefit to the farmer of around 70 pence per cow per day.

Lloyd Thomas from Plas Farm, Llangynog near Carmarthen runs an all year round calving herd of 200 Holstein Friesians. Yields are running at an average of 9,000 litres per cow per year at 3.85% butterfat with the output being sold to Freshways on a liquid contract.

“The cows are performing well, but it’s important we maximise efficiency of output without compromising animal welfare. It was against this background that we asked to have a look at whether the addition of a yeast culture to the winter ration could help cow performance,” recalls Mr Thomas.

Following advice from Rumenco’s local area manager in South Wales, Bruce Jackson, Lloyd Thomas introduced 60g/head/day of XP_{LS} yeast to the ration in the middle of December and fed it for 43 days. The cows winter ration is based on a 50:50 grass:maize silage TMR supplemented with Trafford Gold and a purchased blend.

“Milk yield and composition data was collected for the entire experimental period and soon after the yeast went in average milk yield, butterfat % and yield (kg/day) and protein yield (kg/day) all increased, although the average milk protein did dip slightly,” says Bruce Jackson. “On removal of the yeast culture, yield and butterfat yield fell back again, most apparently in the early lactation cows.” According to Mr Thomas, the consistency of the cow dung also improved.

Bruce Jackson points out that the production benefit stems from the ability of XP yeast to improve rumen function and boost dry matter intake. “Improved feed digestibility means more nutrients are available for absorption, production and reproduction,” he says.

Rumenco says that the cost of feeding the yeast is around 9 pence per cow per day, but feeding trials such as this show the investment is likely to be returned more than eight times over in some high yielding herds.

- ends -