

TMR Test Mix

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Displaced abomasums ? Acidosis-laminitis ? Butterfat depression ? Any of the above plus high feed bills? Maybe the cows suffer from too little effective fiber and cannot perform like they are expected to.

TMR mixers have been a tremendous tool for dairy nutrition management. However, like any other tool, mixer wagons can be poorly managed. When an auger mixer is overloaded, has badly worn augers, or mixes too long, effective fiber can be destroyed. This results in sub-optimal rumen function, poorer production, and increased digestive disease.

A simple test can be done to diagnose mixer abuse of forages and fiber. The TMR test mix is performed with a spring scale, plastic buckets or a weighing tarp, a grain shovel, a dry floor, and some exercise.

HINTS:

1. Abused fiber TMRs will feel much wetter than they really are...moisture is released from the fiber of the silages when they are mashed.
2. **ALWAYS** have the dairy manager conduct this TMR test mix. This test can be so dramatic that

many will not believe the test was done accurately, unless they participated!

3. This problem is difficult, if not impossible, to have if one uses a reel, paddle, or tumble mixer. Auger mixers are the typical problem.

Each feedstuff fed to one cow for one day is collected and weighed. Afterwards, the TMR is mixed by shovel on the dry floor. Comparing the appearance and feeling of the TMR test mix with the "same TMR" as it is delivered from the mixer will often point out the "mixer abuse."

Many dairies have grown beyond the capacity of their TMR mixers. Overloading will lead to extended mixing times, which leads to fiber abuse. We have witnessed good managers accept as routine that the mixer has to run for 10-15 minutes in order to get all the silage into the TMR mix! The space is increased in the mixer because the fiber is mashed up and the normally turgid fiber is collapsed.

Feedstuffs should be weighed, then gently and thoroughly mixed with a mixer. Make sure your TMRs are not Measured, Mixed and MASHED!

Tidbits From Tennessee V

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Well it sure is humbling to receive an encore to be on the Practice Tips Session again this year. As I have gone through my cookbook and ideas, I can't help but think that all of you out there have a lot handier things to talk about, and that mine will get old before long. But I sincerely thank you for the invitation again.

Of the 12 years I was in practice, about 6 were by myself. You all that have gone that route will be able to identify with a lot of what I say. I did about 80% large animal, mostly dairy and horse, with a lot of beef. I also spayed cats, trimmed Doberman ears, and pinned a lot of bones, like most of you all have done — regular old