

REDUCING COSTS BY FEEDING MORE WHEAT SAFELY

One of my main duties as a nutrition consultant is to look at ways of reducing feed costs for my clients whilst maintaining or improving performance. Starch products such as wheat are becoming more cost effective, so I would like to increase levels in diets. We do need to be careful however, as too many fast fermenting feeds can cause problems if the diet is not balanced with sufficient fibre. At the time of writing, fibre sources are still expensive. Molassed sugar beet pulp at £180 keeps other fibre feeds such as soya hulls and citrus pulp at an inflated price. I think this is where NIS Pellets (Nutritionally Improved Straw) comes into the reckoning. Its high digestible fibre level will complement the higher level of starch from increasing the wheat. As wheat has a higher energy level than any of the fibre sources, this will make up for the slightly lower energy in the NIS.

Using the following costs:

Rolled Wheat: £140

Sugar Beet Pulp: £180

NIS Pellets: £130

Ration 1

Molassed Sugar Beet Pulp: 3.0kg

Rolled Wheat: 1.5kg

Total: 4.5kg

Total cost/day: 75p

Ration 2

Rolled Wheat: 3.5kg

NIS: 1.0kg

Total: 4.5kg

Total cost/day: 62p

A saving of 13p/cow/day

100 cows x 13 x 31 = £403.00 saving/month

The two mixes have comparable energy, protein and fibre, whilst the wheat/NIS mix has slightly more starch and sugar. I see this as an advantage as there are numerous medium energy grass silages that would benefit from a bit more starch in the diet.

As always, consult a competent nutritionist before making changes to the diet.

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