

DAIRY PIPELINE

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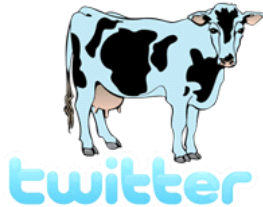
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facebook

twitter

TWEETS AREN'T JUST FOR THE BIRDS: USING TWITTER AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The use of social media has grown tremendously over the past few years. Social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn have created ways for people to stay connected personally and professionally in an on-line format. Twitter, introduced in 2006, is considered a microblog, meaning that it is a blog containing very short entries. It is a means of sharing little tidbits of information, often with a link provided for 'the rest of the story'.

Twitter offers users a quick way to scan what is happening locally, nationally, and globally. Dairy producers and other members of the dairy industry can effectively use Twitter to access dairy and other information as well as to share information with others. Twitter may be accessed through a computer with Internet access or through applications available on smart phones like the iPhone, Blackberry, and Android. To create a free Twitter account, one would first visit twitter.com.

In order to effectively use Twitter, one should become familiar with the jargon associated with it. The following selected definitions are from the Twitter website. Others are provided in the Twitter Help Center on the website.

- ▶ **Tweeting** is the act of posting a message, often called a "Tweet", on Twitter.
- ▶ A **tweet** (noun) is message posted via Twitter containing 140 characters or fewer.
- ▶ A **tweeter** is an account holder on Twitter who posts and reads Tweets. Also known as **Twitterers**.
- ▶ **To follow** someone on Twitter is to subscribe to their Tweets or updates on the site.
- ▶ A **follower** is another Twitter user who has followed you.
- ▶ A **username** is also known as a Twitter handle. It must be unique and contain fewer than 15 characters. It is used to identify you on Twitter for replies and mentions.
- ▶ Mentioning another user in your Tweet by including the @ sign followed directly by their username is called a "mention". This is also

refers to Tweets in which your username was included. Therefore, the @ sign is used to 'call-out' usernames in Tweets.

▶ A **hashtag** (the # symbol) is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet.

A dairy producer may find Twitter useful in a variety of ways including:

- ▶ To receive news and updates from dairy publications, government agencies, and local and national media;
- ▶ To follow the activities of dairy and other agricultural organizations;
- ▶ To educate others about the dairy industry;
- ▶ To search for information on trending topics;
- ▶ To share photos, Tweets from other users, and web links through Tweets.

Members of the Virginia dairy industry might find the following Twitter accounts to be of interest.

Virginia Tech:

Department of Dairy Science (@VTDairyScience)
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
(@VTAgLifeSci)

Virginia Cooperative Extension (@VCE_news)

Government:

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (@VaAgriculture)

United States Department of Agriculture (@USDA)

Dairy Organizations:

Dairy Calf and Heifer Association (@CalfandHeifer)

Holstein Association USA (@HolsteinUSA)

National Milk Producers Federation (@nmpf)

North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge
(@DairyChallenge)

Dairy news and information:

Dairy Business (@dairybusiness)

Dairy Farming Today (@DairyFarmToday)

Dairy Herd Network (@DairyHerd)

Dairy Today (@DairyToday)

Feedstuffs (@Feedstuffs)

Hoard's Dairyman (@HoardsDairyman)

Progressive Dairyman (@PDMag)

ACTIVITIES

Feeder Management Workshop

June 5, Hodges View Dairy, Rocky Mount, VA. Contact Bob James (jamesre@vt.edu) or Cynthia Martel (cmartel@vt.edu) for more information.

FFA Dairy Food Career Development Event

June 18, Virginia Tech. See www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu for details.

FFA Dairy Cattle Career Development Event and Dairy Handlers Activity

June 19-20, Virginia Tech. See www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu for details.

State 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl:

June 26, Virginia Tech. See www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu for details.

If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services or other accommodations for any Extension event, please discuss your accommodation needs with the Extension staff at your local Extension office at least 1 week prior to the event.

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Dairy promotion and research:

SUDIA (@sedairy)
National Dairy Council (@NtlDairyCouncil)

Social media is not meant to take a lot of time. It’s designed to provide snapshots of what is happening in the world around us.

The Department of Dairy Science also has a presence on Facebook. Find and like us on Facebook under the Virginia Tech Dairy Science page.

—Dave Winston
Extension Dairy Scientist &
Dairy Youth Program Coordinator,
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HIGH FEED PRICES, LOW MILK PRICES! WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Current economic conditions are causing intense frustration throughout the dairy industry. There are many items over which you have no control, but there ARE things that you can control—both from an income and expense perspective. Our five year study of feed management illustrated many opportunities which exist to improve income over feed cost. Too often dairy producers make the mistake of assuming that a good nutritionist will fix all of their problems to assure high milk production at a low cost per cwt. It’s up to the dairy manager to ensure that the recommendations are carried out. Focus on these three items to improve the accuracy of the feeding program.

1.) Test forages monthly regardless of the herd size. This costs between \$32 and \$150 depending on the sophistication of the analyses requested. This sounds expensive, but the alternative is far more costly.

► For a typical 150 cow dairy in Virginia, \$150 amounts to \$.03 / cow / month. Reducing soybean meal overfeeding by .13 lb. per cow or increasing milk yield by 0.16 lb. per cow would offset this expense.

2.) Measure silage dry matters at least weekly or whenever one detects a change in feed quality. Dry matter can be determined on the farm with a Koster tester, microwave oven, or food dehydrator—all equipment with a minimal expense. The impact of moisture on ration balance can be large. If one assumes a herd is fed 70 lb. of corn silage / cow / day at 38% DM a reduction to 32% DM results in 3.2 Mcal less energy and 0.34 lb. less protein. For a 1400 lb. cow producing milk with 3.5% fat that’s about 6.5 lb. less milk or \$1.17 less income per day.

3.) Improve feeding accuracy. The phosphorous incentive program studied eight

farms which implemented the use of feed management software and a new indicator for their mix wagons. This enabled managers to download feeding instructions and to monitor how accurately the feeder loaded ingredients and delivered the rations. Use of this technology resulted in the best managers achieving accuracy within 1% of that specified by the nutritionist. In contrast, we found that feeders and managers who did not use the technology very well deviated from the specified rations by more than 8%. The challenge is that in some cases feeders underfed key ingredients and overfed other ingredients. The result is that cows are either underfed and produce less milk the next day or overfed key ingredients, thus wasting feed. This technology would cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000. Again, this sounds expensive until one considers that our example 150 cow dairy with 50 lb. of dry matter intake per cow costing \$.16/lb. spends \$1200 / day on feed alone. Reducing overfeeding by 1 lb. of dry matter would enable a payoff of the investment in less than seven months. Additional benefits of higher milk yield accrue with less daily variation in ration composition.

These three items require a commitment by the manager to adopt routine practices of forage analyses and monitoring of dry matter. Feed management software and hardware with proven success on dairies includes: (in alphabetical order) EZ Feed, Feed Supervisor, Feed Watch and TMR Tracker.

—Bob James,
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For more information on Dairy Extension or to learn about current programs, visit us at VT Dairy—Home of the Dairy Extension Program at: www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu.



Bob James,
Dairy Extension Coordinator & Extension Dairy Scientist,
Dairy Nutrition

www.ext.vt.edu

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