Ration Rx

Attitudes Opinions Facts

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This is a brief report of the experiences some Michigan dairymen have had with Ration Rx computer-formulated rations. These examples represent only a few of the thousands of dairymen in 18 states who have used this Ration Rx computer program as a management tool in their dairy operation.

The following statements show what attitudes and opinions these Michigan dairymen have of computer ration formulation and what benefits they derive from the use of this valuable management tool.

The principal benefits of Ration Rx computer-formulated rations, as cited in these comments, are these:

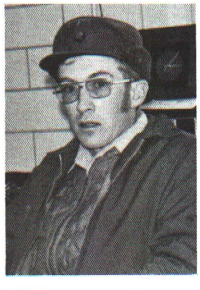
— *Reduce feed cost*
— *Aid crop management*
— *Increase milk production*
— *Improve herd health*
—*Increase milk income*
— *Guide individual feeding programs.*

Mike Fagen

There is no doubt the computer ration formulations can save you money on feed costs. I use it more as a guideline to make my own ration formulations because I believe each cow must be fed as an individual. It is very important for optimum milk production to have nutritionally balanced rations.

I believe it is well worth over $100 to any dairyman to get balanced rations for his entire dairy herd; it's worth it to me.

Kaye Goodell and Sons



We began using computer-balanced rations in 1972 when the service first became available, and we received some increase in milk production as a result. Now, however, the biggest advantage for us is that it helps us manage our cropping system.

We ran several rations, using different feeds and quantities of feeds to determine the effects on feeding cost. From these ration formulations, we estimate how much of our various crops we should raise to attain the lowest feeding cost.

We were surprised at first to see how much protein we needed to feed. We thought our feeds provided much more protein for the cows than was actually provided.

Bruce and Gary Protzman

During the two years we have used the computer balanced rations we've increased our production from 15,307 lb of milk and 587 lb of fat to 16,763 lb of milk and 740 lb of fat without any culling and while increasing herd size from 61 to 100 cows. For several months we decided to try a commercial feeding program that we were told would increase our production greatly. We received bad results from that, with reduced production and a large number of fat cows. Immediately we went back to the computer-balanced ration and again got our production level on the increase.

Gary Steere

The first year we used the program was the first year it came out, and our herd average jumped 1,000 lb; of course, we had a few problems other than nutrition which accounted for some of that increase. After our first ration balancing we found we weren't feeding enough minerals or salt; the computer ration told us exactly how much to feed.

I believe this is a very valuable management tool, and I use it as a guideline to tailor a feeding program to my particular feeding situation.

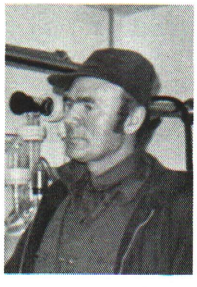
John Szymanski

Balanced rations and a good, sound feeding program are two of the most important production factors on a dairy farm. Proper nutrition alone can make or break you in milk production, and without the computer balanced ration I couldn't have stayed in business long.

My records show we have come a long way; in January 1975 our rolling herd average for 40 Holsteins was 7,600 lb of milk. By January 1976 our average jumped to 15,450 lb of milk with 43 cows. Without the use of the computer and a forage lab analysis I couldn't have done it. I can't tell the actual feed value of a bale of hay just by picking it up.

The basic point here is that a cow needs an adequate balanced ration, and the computer will formulate one.

Nick Tensen



I milk a herd of 100 registered and grade Holsteins with a rolling herd average that was down slightly at 13,598 lb of milk. I sent some feed samples to Ohio State University for laboratory analysis; and using this information, a computer ration formulation was made.

The major change to my ration consisted of increasing the protein level I was feeding. After the change was made, production jumped 387 lb per day from December 1975 to January 1976. This increase in milk production increased my gross income by about $1,000 per month.

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