

YEAST SOLUTIONS

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ACTISAF ENHANCES HERD PERFORMANCE FROM GRAZING

Robin Ward milks 450 Holstein Friesian cows at Hungerford Farm in Madeley, Staffordshire, where he operates a paddock-based grazing system across 450 acres. Cows are achieving yields of 7,000 litres, with the herd milked twice a day and turned out to fresh pasture after every milking.

The enterprise aims to maximise its use of grazing, with cows being turned out as early as February if conditions allow. The herd is split into two calving blocks, with those due to calve in autumn being housed from October and the rest of the herd staying out until December.

Housed cows are fed a mixture of whole crop and grass silage, which Robin specially layers in the farm clamp.

"I like to layer my silage along the whole length of the clamp from the bottom up," explained Robin, "adding a new layer of forage material as and when it is harvested. This may cause a few headaches for contractors, but it means that every load of silage taken from the face of the clamp has a balanced mixture of different grass cuts and maize silage."

Six months ago, at the suggestion of HJ Lea Oakes adviser, Philip Jackson, Robin changed his concentrate feed to ActiGraze, which includes Actisaf live yeast.

"Whilst we want to make the most from forage," continued Robin, "we don't compromise on cow health and always make sure that they are getting enough extra feed to ensure good performance."

Milking cows are now fed in parlour at a flat rate of 5kg of ActiGraze/head/day, with a slight reduction in the amount fed if grazing conditions are really good.

"The new compound was suggested to complement the grazing system we have at Hungerford Farm," explained Robin. "We had previously been using another product, which didn't contain Actisaf, but we hadn't been getting as good results."

"ActiGraze dairy feed is especially formulated to balance grazing, and the inclusion of Actisaf live yeast helps improve rumen performance, reducing acidosis and optimising dry matter intakes," explained Philip from HJ Lea Oakes.



And it certainly seems to work for Robin. Since changing to the new feed, cow performance has been phenomenal. Dung is much more consistent, feed intakes have increased and fertility has really improved, while milk quality has averaged a respectable 3.91% butterfat and 3.52% protein.

"I am glad I made the switch to ActiGraze," he concluded. "It isn't the cheapest feed around, but the benefits that it has brought mean that herd performance has improved and we are getting a good return on our investment, which is great news."



ACTISAF PROVING A GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT...

Despite low milk prices and the current trend to reduce expenditure on feed, one dairy farming couple won't contemplate removing Actisaf from their herd's diet.

Situated near Scarva in County Armagh, Lisrawglen Holsteins consists of 80-pedigree Holstein cows, owned by Ivan and Elaine Williamson.

Ivan and Elaine have recently cut back from three to two times a day milking and their herd currently achieves average yields of 10,000 litres per cow/year. The farm breeds all its own replacements, with calving taking place all year round.

"Our cows are usually turned out in mid March and will come back in, full time, by October," explained Ivan. "However, during the summer months we will bring the herd back inside during the night. We have a limited grazing platform near the farm, so we bring our cows indoors to make sure that their feed intakes are high enough to maintain good performance."

Without a diet mixer on their farm, Ivan and Elaine operate a very simple feeding system, which utilises large quantities of high sugar, home-grown silage fed down the barrier.

"Traditionally cows were fed to yield exclusively through computerised in-parlour feeders," continued Elaine, "but this year, we have also introduced automated out of parlour feeders to help spread the cows' concentrate intakes throughout the day."

Ivan and Elaine started using Actisaf on their farm more than a year ago, on the advice of Gareth Gibson, regional technical sales manager for Phileo UK and Ireland.

"We were looking for a way to stabilise the butterfat content of our milk and maintain good digestive function," said Elaine, "and Gareth suggested that we give Actisaf Farmpack a try. The results were so good that we have carried on using the product to this day."

"As well as an improvement in butterfat levels, the cows have just generally been performing really well since we started using Actisaf, with good health and fertility and limited incidences of acidosis."

"We push our cows quite hard, with high concentrate intakes, so it is good to know that Actisaf is in their ration to stabilise rumen pH and maintain strong rumen performance."

Despite the extra cost that that Actisaf adds to their feed bill, Ivan and Elaine believe that it is well worth the expense, even in the current climate of low milk prices.

"We know that some producers are looking at ways to reduce feed bills over the coming winter," explained Elaine, "but even though it represents an additional cost, we would be very reluctant to take Actisaf out of the herd's diet. It performs really well and benefits the cows, so we think that it offers a good return on investment."

DON'T LET FORAGE VARIABILITY IMPACT HERD PERFORMANCE

On most dairy and beef farms there is huge variability in forage through the winter months as a result of variability within a silage clamp, changes between clamps or, in the case of maize silage, changes in starch digestibility within a clamp over time. This situation is made worse where farmers clamp second or third cut silage on top of first cut.

This inconsistency in forage has a significant impact on the nutritional composition of the ration presented to cows. As well as negatively impacting on milk production, this variability can promote wide fluctuations in rumen pH leading to rumen upset (technically termed sub acute rumen acidosis or SARA), which results in lower feed intakes culminating in reduced milk production and poorer fertility in dairy cows, and reduced live weight gains in beef cattle.

Thankfully, there is a solution. Adding Actisaf live yeast to the diet will:

- Minimise lost production during diet changes
- Minimise dips in performance due to forage variability
- Stabilise rumen pH and reduce the risk of acidosis
- Improve feed utilisation and give more milk from forage

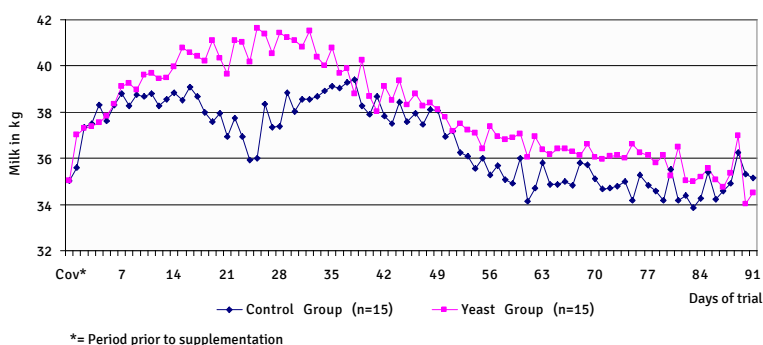


Actisaf can be added to your compound feed by your local feed mill or can be purchased as a farm pack, which can easily be mixed into TMR rations on farm.

RESEARCH SHOWS ACTISAF SUPPLEMENTATION PREVENTS A DIP IN PRODUCTION WHEN FORAGES CHANGE

A study conducted in France has shown that supplementing dairy cows with Actisaf live yeast during a period of diet change prevented a dip in production.

Cows from the same commercial herd, milked on a robot, were allocated into two groups (a control group and an Actisaf group) for a thirteen-week period. The rolling herd average production was 11,930kg at 4.0% fat and 3.2% protein and at the start of the trial cows in the trial groups averaged around 40 days in milk. Cows in each group were early lactation and were balanced for parity, days in milk, milk production level and milk composition. Grouping was performed according to averages and tested statistically. Both groups were fed the same base mixed ration ad lib, which was formulated for M+30. Cows were also fed to yield with two different compound feeds through the robot milkers.



During the period of the trial no other feed additives (such as buffers, etc.) were used and all cows received the control group ration prior to the start of the trial.

Part way through the trial the grass silage was changed and feeding Actisaf proved to be efficient at maintaining consistent milk yield even during this change, as shown on the graph, whilst cows in the control group saw milk yield reduce by as much as 4kg/day at this time.



ACTISAF AND SAFMANNAN COMBINATION HELP REDUCE SCOUR INCIDENCE FOR CALF REARER...

Buying in young calves to rear on multi-suckled cows can be fraught with difficulty. For a start, you don't know the health status of the calf you are buying, whether it had enough colostrum at birth, nor whether it will even suckle a cow. This approach also mixes animals into new social groupings, which can increase stress and, as a result, the incidence of disease problems.

But one farmer who adopts this management approach thinks he has found the answer. Up until November 2013 Sean Quinn was a dairy farmer, but he gave up milking and moved to rearing beef animals, which he buys as young calves and sells as strong stores.

He has a small herd of suckler cows on his County Armagh farm, and these are multi-

suckled 4-6 calves/cow, with all of the calves being supplemented with a once-a-day feed with milk powder. This means that Sean buys in around 80 calves each year from local markets.

"We previously saw problems with scour in the calves and they were often unsettled on arrival," Sean explained. "To help address these issues we started including a combination of Actisaf live yeast and Safmannan yeast cell wall material in our milk powder."

The products, which are sold blended in an easy to use bucket, are designed to aid in the development of the calf's gut whilst also protecting the digestive system and lowering the risk of scour.

"We add the Actisaf and Safmannan blend

to the milk powder as soon as the calves arrive and continue to use it every day until the calves are about 5-6 months old," Sean said. "Since we started using it we've found that the calves are much more content, cud well and we've had very few problems with scour."

In fact, so impressed was Sean with the results, that he is also now including Actisaf in the diet for older calves too.

"We now add Actisaf as a farm pack to the older calves' diet, mixing it in with the meal, which is then fed with hay and molasses. These products have transformed our calf rearing – it is easier to rear good calves and it is easily the best feed product I've ever tried."



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