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Performing a TMR Audit

Dairy Newsletter
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Have you ever had or considered having a TMR audit performed on your farm? Making feed is one of the most important jobs on the farm. Variation in the TMR can lead to sorting at the bunk, variable and decreased milk production, variable milk fat, decreased efficiency of milk production, and inconsistent manure. As with many things having a second set of eyes around can help discover any procedure drift or things that could be improved.

Typically during a TMR audit we assess:

1. Forage quality & silo management
 - How well is the bunk face managed in a horizontal bunker?
 - How well packed is the bunk?
 - What type of plastic is used on top and how well covered is the bunk?
 - Is there any visible spoilage?



This is an image from progressive dairyman of a very well managed bunk face

2. TMR consistency and mixing. After feeding we will assess variation at the bunk using the Penn-State shaker box on feed from 8 – 10 different areas along the bunk. Variation between each sample should be less than 2.5% for the middle sieve of the pan. If it is

higher this is an indication that somewhere along the mixing procedure improvements can be made.

- Where is the load mixed? Is the ground level and how are ingredients added?
- Is the TMR mixer well maintained?
- How much time is allowed for mixing after the last ingredient is added and how large are the loads?
- In what order are the ingredients added?
- If dry hay and/or straw is added how is it processed?



An example of a load that is too full and will not mix properly

3. What times of day do you deliver feed and how often?
 - How often is it pushed up in between?
4. What amount of feed refusals do you allow?
 - What do you do with the feed refusals?
 - Are the refusals measured? This allows you to accurately measure dry matter intake in the cows.

According to a study by Stephen LeBlanc in 2013, the average Ontario dairy farm has a 74% variation in feed refusals, 7.7% variation in the middle Penn-State shaker pan, and 6.1% variation in the bottom shaker pan. This means that many farms can benefit from a TMR audit to improve feeding practices on the farm.

If you are interested in learning how your farm would measure up with a TMR audit please contact Rick, Phil, or myself. We would be happy to set up a nutrition consult with you and your nutritionist!

Have a good month,

Rachel Poppe