

The following 2 pages are a reprint from the October-November 2002 issue of *KOW Ruminations*.

Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties. -Spurgeon

KOW Ruminations

Fully independent soil consulting-agronomy-nutrition. We do dairy nutrition from the soil up.

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No Blue Ribbon for the State Fair Ration How would ya like to be feeding this during low milk prices?!

Ever heard of *solving* problems with a sore finger by having someone stomp on your foot? Everything is relative. These low milk prices (on the farm, *not in the store*) are more than just a *little* irritation (like a sore finger). However, since I'm not able to do anything about the price of milk, I thought to offer an example of *greater misery* in order to help you feel a little better.

Most of our clients are currently suffering under this milk price to some degree. (Most, but *not all* -certified organic clients are doing well –but I will not tell you *how well*, so as to avoid *increasing* your level of misery.) Yes, this method of psychotherapy is a form of *brainwashing*, but so is what the FSA office is doing. Should anyone be surprised that processors no longer wish to pay for milk when politicians have decided the taxpayers (all of us) should “help”? Responsibilities shared by all, shall be *neglected by all equally*. Please join me in prayer for our country –that

John Q. Public would awake to the fact that *food security* is a *foundational* part of “*homeland security*” and that the most *secure* supply of food will come from small businesses (family farms) -not *collective* (corporate) farms (to use a little socialist / communist lingo).

I want you farmers all to know that I think you are important, that if it were my decision, you'd be paid \$2/gallon (\$23.25/cwt -that's what I pay farmer direct right now for approx 50 gal/month to feed my family) and that if we as a nation continue on the path we're currently on, we've got a lot more to lose than farmers. Sure we can *import* all our food – as wise as importing our military . . .

Now on to the psychotherapy: Following is thanks to our Associate Bob Hansen. It's a comparison of two rations, one he came across on display at the Wisconsin State Fair this year and the other similar to what's being fed on a client's farm. Which model do you think is *suffering less* under current milk prices? No doubt, a “team of experts” out of either the feed industry or our university (what's the difference?!) advised on the State Fair ration example. **Where you get your advice may be the difference of whether you can bail water to get by in times of low milk prices or whether the ship sinks.** Unfortunately, current production management advice is about as

helpful as the Federal Farm Program –maybe there's some common goals. . .

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Wisconsin State Fair Ration, by Bob Hansen

While attending the recent Wisconsin State Fair, I came across something I think is

interesting. On the center aisle of the recently remodeled dairy barn, there was a large display put together to inform people about Wisconsin's dairy industry. Overall, I thought the display was done well and would provide good information to the large numbers of dairy *consumers* who would go through the barn. The Wisconsin State Fair Dairy Promotion Board put the display together. This board is made up of dairy processors, farmers, dairy industry people, etc. Included was the following lactating cow ration. It was stated that the ration would support milk production of 96 half-pint containers of milk (51.6#, if milk is 8.6#/gal. Only 52#?!). The display only showed the “as fed” pounds. I added the purchased feed cents/day at current prices and converted to dry

The “*cheap food policy*” must not continue . . . “A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largess from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy collapses over loose fiscal policy . . . Always followed by a dictatorship.” -Alexis de Tocqueville

Forage:concentrate: 72:28 on a DM basis: Much more herd health and longevity potential! I can show you an example of 70# of milk / cow on this type of feeding.

Off farm purchases: Depending on acreage available for home grown feeds and the optional beet pulp, this ration would call for approx 44-84¢ per cow/day of purchased feed. This cropping plan would call for a greatly reduced *or eliminated* herbicide and insecticide bill.

As you already noticed the ration I list is a grazing ration. I do realize there is a learning curve when starting to graze, but I do think *some* grazing would be of benefit for nearly any farm. Especially in the areas of machinery cost, labor cost, manure hauling, vet bill, as well as feed cost. However, **there are other very good options (which many of you are currently doing) such as haylage / balage and BMR sorg-sudangrass based rations that would also greatly reduce off farm purchases while improving health and longevity.**

Unfortunately, the State Fair ration is considered by many industry “advisors” to be “The way” to feed cows. It amazes me that we still hear a well rehearsed list of why alternatives “just won’t work” in spite of countless on-farm successes and favorable, profitability studies.

What do you think? These two rations clearly will take the farmer down two very different roads. Which road would you rather be on?

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So is Bob Hansen pointing you the *wrong* way in this fork in the road? I don’t think so. While times are tough, KOW Consulting intends to keep presenting ideas on the production management front that’ll help you through. Thanks so much for working with KOW –we appreciate your business! Let us know when we can get together with you this fall and winter to plan for a better year in 2003.

Don’t follow or think like the crowd. “The crowd is often wrong. The crowd can be like a bunch of sheep, easily led by the media or other mass influences. Herd mentality is dangerous. . . Often contrary thinking can pay off . . . So often the crowd does the wrong thing.” -Erlin Weness, retired U of M, professor, farm business management.

Product	As Fed #	Dry Matter #
Haylage	29	12
Corn Silage	48	16 3/4
Wet Brewer's Grains	22 (28¢ cow/day)	4 1/2
Dry Corn	11	9 1/4
Mineral Mix ()	3 (\$1 cow/day)	2 3/4
(Na-Bicarb, mineral premix, 4-plex (for “foot health”), calcium, phosphorus, soy-pass, salt, corn		
Cotton Seed	3 (20¢ cow/day)	2 3/4
Gluten Feed	3 (15¢ cow/day)	2 3/4
Molasses	2 (30¢ cow/day)	1 3/4
TOTAL	121 (\$1.93)	52 1/2

Forage:concentrate 41:59 on a DM basis: This is considering the haylage, 1/2 corn silage, 1/2 cotton seed as forage. The rest is concentrate / grain. No dry hay listed. (Not needed?). Big potential for health and longevity problems in the barn!

Off farm purchases: This ration calls for \$1.93 / cow / day of off farm purchases (about \$70,000 for 100 cows per year!). The cropping plan necessary to produce this much corn and corn silage would require a large amount of corn on corn resulting in higher insecticide, herbicide bills, *and many more potential soil / agronomy / nutrition problems.*

If I were to exhibit a ration at the Wisconsin State Fair, it would be similar to the following:

Product	As Fed #	Dry Matter #
Good Milk Cow Pasture	110 approx	27
Dry Hay and/or dry balage	14-22	11
Grain (shell corn, oats) (beet pulp optional -40¢)	14	12
Roasted Soy Beans (14¢)	1	1
Mineral (30¢ cow/day)	.75	.75
TOTAL (44¢ to 84¢)	140 approx	50