We're Sampling

Volume 3, Issue 1

February 2014

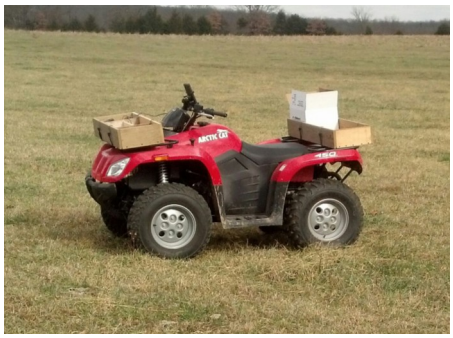
Steven Koch, South Central MFA Bulk Plants Sales Manager

We had a good fall/winter Grid Sampling. We have mapped and sampled over 1,500 acres so far. Grid Sampling is a soil nutrient management tool that farmers have come to realize will help them in making fertilizer applications and crop selections for the growing season.

Grid Sampling is an intensive soil sampling program that we use to help determine the good and bad areas of your fields. We map the perimeter of your field, and then break it down into 2.5 acre sections or grids. Then we drive to the middle of that grid and take 8-10 soil cores around that spot, that will be Sample 1. We then drive to the next grid center, sample, and that will be Sample 2, and so on, until the field is completely sampled. Then we mail all samples to Midwest Labs in Nebraska for testing.

After the sample results come back, we plug in your yield information, whether it's a 2 -ton hay yield or 50 bu soybean yield. When yield information is completed, we can then look at the variability of the soil nutrients, depleted or reserve, within the different grid areas.

Now what to do with that information. With the variability across the field, how do I spread my fertilizer? We have the answer! We have fertilizer spreader trucks with a computer inside; we download your field information into the computer and load the proper product and start driving. As we drive across the field, the computer tells the conveyer to speed up or slow down to apply the right amount of product on the right acres.



We can Variable Rate Spread lime and fertilizer, phosphorus and potassium. In the spring if you want to make a Flat Rate Nitrogen application, you can apply your sulfur and zinc at that time.

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Special points of interest:

- *MFA Foundation Scholarship*
- *February Recipe*
- *Upcoming Events*
- *Buying Fertilizer?*

MFA AGRI SERVICES

...Continued from Front Page If you want more information or would like to see how your field varies, call me, and we'll set up an appointment to get your acres sampled and see the variability in your field.

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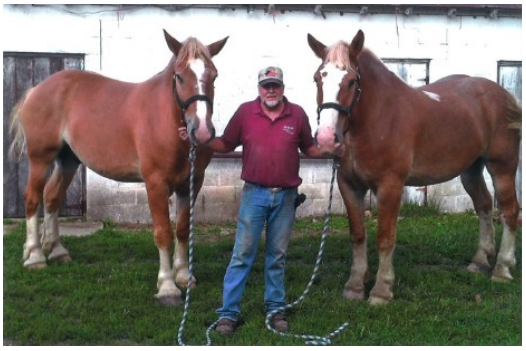
Attention High School Seniors!
Apply for the MFA Foundation Scholarship!

It's that time of year again; time for area high school seniors to decide what they want to do with the rest of their lives. If they decide to attend college, scholarships are extremely helpful in providing the financial means in order to achieve their aspirations of a higher education. MFA offers scholarships to graduating seniors of local high schools. Each MFA and MFA affiliated location gives at least one local high school senior a one-time $2,000 scholarship.

Have your high school seniors ask their counselor about the MFA scholarship and other Agriculture related scholarships. If the counselor does not have information on these scholarships, please contact your local MFA store for more information. The MFA Foundation Scholarship application is DUE March 15, 2014. Please see your high school counselor for more information.

Get to Know Your South Central Employees: J.R. Ramsey

J.R. Ramsey has been the mechanic at Mountain Grove Feed and Fertilizer for 11 years. He has kept our small fleet of trucks running in top shape. To many of his fellow employees, he has been more than a mechanic. He has been known, at times, as a master carpenter, welder, engineer, roofer, tree trimmer, and many other things too numerous to mention. He has been a great asset to the South Central Group and a very helpful friend to all his co-workers.



J.R. has lived his whole life in the Ellis Prairie-Bucyrus area. He and his wife, Tressia, have 2 children, Jessie and Ty, as well as 3 grandchildren, Ethan, Raven, and Dallas. J.R. spent most of his life as a logger and a mechanic. He came to work at Mountain Grove Feed and Fertilizer in August of 2002. His farm holds a lot of his attention when he is not working at MFA. He has hay to put up, animals to feed, wood to cut, and spends time with his horses. Anyone who knows J.R. very well knows that he has two loves in his life: his family and his horses. His vacation time is usually spent going to horse sales, chuck wagon races, spring turkey season, and an occasional hunting trip to Colorado.

Feeding MFA Feeds vs Commodities

Jody Boles, Feed ASM

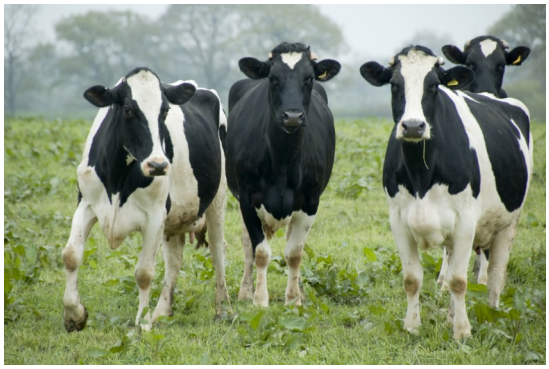
In the last few years, the use of by-product feedstuffs in feeding dairy cows has increased. Some feedstuffs, such as whole cottonseed, soybean hulls and soybean meal have been widely accepted. While others such as corn gluten feed, distiller's grain and brewer's grain have started recently becoming more acceptable. Feeding commodity feeds can reduce feed costs and seemingly be a good value. However, there is risk of a seemingly good deal not being such a bargain when all factors are considered.

We must not forget when we feed the dairy cow, we are not feeding her feedstuffs, but are feeding her nutrients. She needs an adequate quantity AND quality of nutrients if she is to perform to our expectations. The following example may help clarify the issue.

Herd A is feeding a mix of hominy, corn gluten feed, brewer's grains, soybean meal and whole cottonseed, along with some ground corn. The forage portion is corn silage and alfalfa hay. The farmer's grain cost per cow is approximately $4.79/d (14.5 cents/lb.), and he is getting about 50 lbs of milk. If a milk value of $20/cwt is used, cows have an income of $5.21 over grain cost. Cows are eating about 33 lbs/day of this mix, which is partially replacing forage, which high-fiber commodities can do to a small degree.

Herd B is feeding MFA Turbo 16 with cottonseed. Alfalfa hay is the forage part of the diet. Their grain cost per cow is approximately $3.81/d (15.25 cents/lb.), and cows are eating 25 lbs of the mix. The farmer is getting 70 lbs of milk per day. If their milk value is $10.19/cow/day, then income over grain cost is $6.38, or $1.17/cow/day higher than the herd feeding commodities.

This does not mean if the herd feeding commodities changes to Turbo, their herd will instantly reach 70 lbs of milk per cow, but it does illustrate that feeding commodities instead of a branded feed product is not necessarily better because of price. It depends on what one is getting for that price. Commodity feeds have an important role in dairy cattle nutrition, but it goes back to the dairy cow needing quality AND quantity of nutrients. If she doesn't get that in her diet, a lower price can end up costing more in the long run.



The use of feeds which are consistent and will deliver adequate quality AND quantity of nutrients will ensure the dairy cow will have a good opportunity to milk well. MFA has a dairy line of feeds, including Super Cow, Turbo, and Heartland feeds. Many of these feeds contain buffer, additional fat, and other ingredients such as biotin for foot health. It is important when comparing by-product feeds in rations to keep in mind that MFA includes these additional ingredients to help the dairy cow efficiently utilize the available nutrients. By making sure to compare apples to apples, the advantages of carefully formulated MFA feeds become more clear.

With the price of milk increasing and forages more readily available, it is vital to take advantage of the opportunities at hand. Your MFA representatives will be willing and able to assist you to take advantage of the current situation. Please call me if you have any questions.

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Why is Body Conditioning Your Cattle Important?

Dr. James White, Director of Livestock Nutrition

A herd of cows in good flesh has more calves and weans heavier calves.

Variation in the body condition of beef cows has a number of practical implications. The BCS of cows at calving is associated with length of post partum interval, subsequent lactation performance, new born calf health and vigor. Excessive condition is often overrated as a cause of dystocia in older cows, although fat heifers are known to be prone to calving difficulty. The condition of cows at breeding affects their reproductive performance in terms of services for conception, calving interval and the percentage of open cows.

What to do now? A couple of months ahead of your calving season, sort the cows according to condition. If you can see ribs, they are going to be less than a BCS 5, so that group of cows should be fed to gain weight. Those cows that are 5-7 go into the "maintenance to slight gain" body weight group. I have not seen many cows over 7 other than some pets and ET cows.

Why is having cows in good condition important? Because it makes a difference when cows get bred. If a cow doesn't get pregnant - that will get her killed. Work out of Florida looked at several different measurements, and having a BCS greater than 5 drastically improved the chances of a cow surviving preg check. Below in Trial 1, the percent of cows that had been in heat within 80 days after calving was lower for cows with a body condition of less than 5 than for cows scoring more than 5. Low body condition can lead to low pregnancy rates consistent with the reports of the other four trials

	BCS at Calving		
	< 4	5	Greater than 5
Trial 1			
Number of cows	272	364	50
% in heat after 80 days of calving	62	88	98
Trial 2			
Number of cows	78	10	
% pregnant after 60 days	69	80	
Trial 3			
Number of cows	25	139	23
% pregnant after 60 days	24	60	87
Trial 4			
Number of cows	32	60	32
% pregnant after 180 days	12	50	90
Trial 5			
Number of cows	168	274	197
% pregnant after 60 days	70	90	92

When cows are thin, the calving interval increases. To compensate for increased production costs, calves from cows with extended calving intervals must have a heavier weaning weight than calves from cows with shorter intervals. Or an increase in sale price must occur. Depending on either factor, adequate compensation is a questionable assumption. With thin cows, long breeding seasons are sometimes suggested. This is not the profitable answer.

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...Continued from Page 4 Even after five and six months of breeding, the cows scoring less than 5 at calving and during breeding did not conceive at an acceptable level. Until they have regained some body condition or have had their calf weaned, most thin cows will not rebreed regardless of how long they are exposed to the bulls.

To get weight back onto cows, the practical management implication is to supplementally feed cows based on body condition score. Body condition significantly alters the requirement for supplemental energy and slightly alters the need for supplemental protein, but it is not a determining factor of mineral or vitamin supplementation. Mineral supplementation is always required in that plant based feed sources are always deficient of multiple minerals. In addition to body condition, cow nutrient requirements are influenced by weight, mature size, breed type, milk production level, travel and environmental stresses. All things being equal, younger cows are going to need more lbs of supplemental feed than older cows; if we feed to the older cows, the younger cows will be short. Also older, bigger cows are better at pushing and shoving which has a big impact on supplemental feed intake, especially where the supplement is modest, say feeding two pounds of cubes a day on the ground. The older cows will have a tendency to engage in extralegal violence. If possible, it can be helpful to separate cows by age, size, and BCS.

One of the most crucial factors influencing the calf's survival and performance is whether the calf absorbs enough immunoglobulins from the colostrum to protect it at birth until the calf's own immune system becomes functional. How the dam is fed influences colostrum quantity and quality. Cows fed lower energy diets have been shown to have reduced colostrum yield and reduced colostrum solids (i.e. lower level of immunoglobulins). This is troublesome on both accounts, in that lower yield means less volume to feed, combined with lower concentration reduction in available immunoglobulins to the calf is inevitable. Feeding adequate vitamin E and selenium has been shown to improve colostrum quality, as has feeding beta glucans and mannan oligosaccharides. MFA Ricochet products have been fortified with the specific additives and nutrients to encourage higher colostrum quality.

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CTI Molasses Tubs with Bio-Mos: A New Beginning in Calf Health

Darren Scheets, South Central General Manager & Mtn Grove Agri Manager

The Spring of 2007 created many problems for beef producers. Heavy snow loads, ice storms, and cold temperatures gave way to rain and mud. It seemed like the wet conditions lasted forever. It was a recipe for disaster for young calves. Scours and respiratory problems followed. During those tough conditions we started using a yeast culture made by Alltech, called Bio-Mos. Bio-Mos stimulates the immune system, cleans up the digestive system, and helps the calves fight off disease. The results were amazing. In instances where calves were already scouring, we started cows on a tub with Bio-Mos. A week later the scours were gone with no other treatment. Other producers used tubs with Bio-Mos as a preventative. Again the results were fantastic. They had no sickness while the neighbors across the fence treated calf after calf. One producer told us he only treated one calf out of 137 before weaning. Since that time many of our customers have tried tubs with Bio-Mos. The results have been the same, no scours even on farms where scours have been a problem for years.

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When used as a Preventative

Provide CTI Mag Lick Tubs w/ Bio-Mos to the cows one week before the start of the calving season, and feed through the calving season. This will provide a complete program to supplement forage. You will also get the benefit of the stimulation of the immune system plus the increases in the digestibility of forages that the sugars from molasses provide. As a bonus, you get magnesium to prevent grass tetany.

How much will they eat?

Experience tells us that consumption will run about ½ lb per cow/calf pair/day. In cases where forage quality is poor or cows are in poor condition, consumption may run slightly higher.

What will it Cost?

Bio-Mos adds about 2 cents per day or $1.80 for 90 days to cow costs. Producers tell us total cost for a tub with Bio-Mos will run less than 27 cents per cow per day or less than $22.50 for a 90 day calving season. Compare that to your cost for mineral or tubs alone and we believe this may be the best value you can find.

Forwarded from CTI by Darren Scheets

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February Recipe: Red Velvet Cake Balls

Any red velvet cake recipe will work as long as it is meant for a 9x13 pan. If you don't feel like making the actual cake "pops," you can use tooth picks to let them set up and then pull them out to have cake "balls."

Cream Cheese Frosting

Ingredients

8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
1 cup butter, room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla
6 cups confectioners' sugar

Directions

Sift sugar and set aside.
Beat cream cheese and butter on high until creamy. Add vanilla.
Then, add the sugar in batches. Scrape down the sides in between each addition.

Cake Pop Assembly

1. Mix the crumbled cake thoroughly with the frosting. I start the process with a potato masher then switch to my fingers to do this but you will get messy.
2. Roll mixture into quarter size balls and lay on cookie sheet. (Should make 45-50. You can get even more if you use a mini ice cream scooper, but I like to hand roll them.)
3. Chill for several hours. (You can speed this up by putting in the freezer.)
4. Melt approximately a quarter of the chocolate in microwave per directions on package. White or regular chocolate will work. Almond bark seems to stay thinner longer after heating which makes the cake pops look neater.
5. Dip the tip of your lollipop stick in a little of the melted candy coating and insert into the cake balls. (Insert a little less than halfway.)
6. Place them in the freezer for a little while to firm up.
7. Once firm, heat the remaining chocolate in microwave per package directions.
8. Carefully insert the cake ball into the candy coating by holding the lollipop stick and rotating until covered. Once covered remove and softly tap and rotate until the excess chocolate falls off. Don't tap too hard or the cake ball will fall off too.
9. Place in a styrofoam block to dry or several coffee cups will do – just space the pops out so they aren't touching.
10. Wrap each pop in cellophane bag, or arrange in a vase or short weighted cup.

BUYING FERTILIZER?

ARE YOU ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

Fertilizer can be confusing at times. Often producers call their local fertilizer dealer and ask for the price on a 1-1-1 ratio or a 4-1-1 ratio and so on. The answer can be misleading.

MAKE SURE YOU ALSO ASK FOR THE PLANT FOOD ANALYSIS OF EACH RATIO.

For example, a 4-1-1 ratio can be mixed with Ammonium Nitrate (34-0-0) as the nitrogen source or with other products such as Calcium Nitrate (27-0-0-20) or Ammonium Sulfate (21-0-0-26). All products can be used to produce a 4-1-1 ratio fertilizer. However, the analysis will be completely different.

A 4-1-1 using Ammonium Nitrate will have an analysis of approximately 27.77-6.92-6.92. The same ratio using Calcium Nitrate will have an analysis of approximately 23.8-5.5-5.5. The 4-1-1 using Ammonium Sulfate will have an analysis of approximately 19.05-4.76-4.76.

This information can be used to help determine which product will provide the cheapest cost per acre or per pound of plant food.

The ratio using Ammonium Nitrate will provide more actual overall plant food per ton of fertilizer.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO MAKE THE CORRECT DECISION WHEN YOU PURCHASE FERTILIZER THIS YEAR.

If you have questions regarding fertilizer, contact your local MFA Agri Service. Our staff will be glad to find the answers to your questions.

South Central Locations

Ava: (417) 683-4151
Cabool Fertilizer: (417) 962-4370
Houston: (417) 967-2145
Mansfield Fertilizer: (417) 924-3722
Mountain Grove AGRI: (417) 926-4291
Mountain Grove Feed: (417) 926-5900
West Plains: (417) 256-4041
Willow Springs: (417) 469-3193

South Central Bulk Plant Group

Birch Tree Fertilizer: (573) 292-3413
Crocker Fertilizer: (573) 736-2366
Rolla Fertilizer: (573) 364-4964
Salem Fertilizer: (573) 729-4165

ATTENTION

It has come to our attention that a non-profit animal rights activist group, Mercy For Animals, has been using the MFA initials to promote their group and their cause.

MFA stands for Made For Agriculture, and MFA Incorporated is in NO way affiliated with this group or its cause.

Upcoming Events...

The Western Farm Show
February 21 - 23
American Royal Complex
Kansas City, MO

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