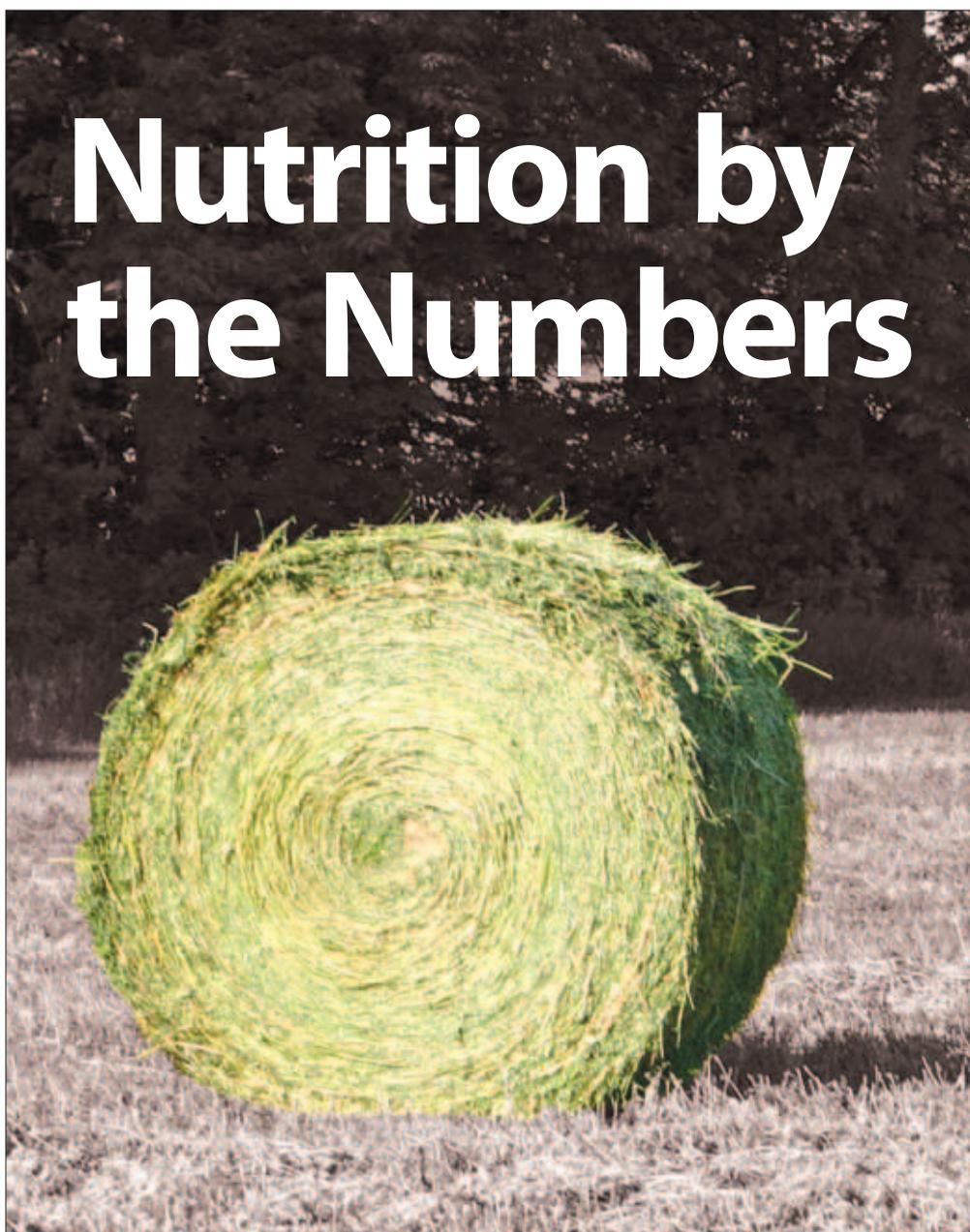


Nutrition by the Numbers



Measuring feeding should go beyond the bale.

A nutrition imbalance can limit the functionality of a vaccine program, impact both cows and calves, and have a ripple effect on the long-term productivity of a herd that stretches across multiple generations. Prevention-minded producers take the details of nutrition into account when making a year-round plan for herd health management.

Factors that boost the cost of feed

"It's easy to see the price on a range cube or bale of grass hay, and think that's all producers need to know," says Dr. Travis Van Anne, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc. professional services veterinarian. "But they also need to think about delivery costs. Hay purchased at \$150 per ton may cost \$250 per ton on a DM basis, delivered to a cow's mouth when all the factors are considered."

Numbers to crunch:

- **Hay prices.** Hay typically runs at 85% of the corn price, so when corn goes up, hay is likely to do the same.
- **Fuel prices for delivery.** It can cost as much as 50 cents per minute to run loaders, including fuel, that help get the feed from the barn to the cow.
- **Waste and shrinkage.** Waste occurs in cow trampling, overwintering-shrinkage/rot and delivery.
- **Price per unit of protein in different feed options.** Producers should price out all the possible feedstuffs to determine which feed provides the right protein for their individual herds.

Dr. Travis Van Anne, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc. professional services veterinarian, has seen the important role nutrition plays in the overall success of a beef operation and its long-range herd health protocol. It is important to compile all of the bottomline costs and compare them against the likely return for both feed and vaccines.

"When nutritional deficiencies lead to weaning a light, unhealthy calf from an open cow, it creates a lot of big problems for you and your banker," he explains. "Their health is compromised; their ability to respond well to a vaccine program is limited, and that can jeopardize the whole herd. Nutrition planning has to go hand in hand with health planning every year to protect success."

A cow needs to consume 2% of her body weight of adequate value feed every day, on a dry-matter (DM) basis, in order to stay healthy; that requirement means providing 30 lb. of feed each day for a 1,350-1,400-lb. animal, when adverse weather is not a factor.

Feed options

Alfalfa provides a high feed volume at an affordable price and often supplies 20% crude protein when routine feed analysis is performed. Cows feel full with

this high-quality roughage and are more able to produce heat during times of cold stress.

Nutritional options like poor-quality hay or residues with lick tubs can also extend other low-quality feed choices, but they can cost significantly more than alfalfa or other grass-based feeds on a per-unit basis. While convenient, they may not provide the same level of protein to every animal; but, when hay prices are on the rise, lick tubs can be a good way to help balance feed and provide key nutrition.

Price considerations

Dr. Van Anne notes that the price of hay is 85% correlated to the price of corn, so as one increases, the other will too. He anticipates that in some areas, hay supplies will be short in 2013, while prices stay high.

With increasing fuel prices, freight to get feed to the ranch is increasingly expensive. Costs can run as high as 50 cents per minute to run a loader tractor or a three-quarter-ton pickup, including fuel, to get feed out to the animals. Producers also need to account for shrink, waste, delivery and processing costs, which greatly affect the price of the feed the cow is actually consuming.

"It's easy to see the price on a range cube or bale of grass hay," says Dr. Van Anne. "But they also need to think about delivery costs. Hay purchased at \$150 per ton may cost \$250 per ton on a DM basis, delivered to a cow's mouth when all the factors are considered. It's an investment worth making if it strengthens the

Feed matters to vaccine performance

- Young cows need adequate protein to develop a healthy immune response.
- A healthy immune system is best equipped to take in vaccines, further reinforcing the effectiveness of protocols.
- In times of stress, tracking protein levels delivered will help identify times to boost nutrition.
- Pasture parasite residues can threaten cows already lacking in healthy immune systems and full-powered vaccines.

vaccine program, and the overall health of the animal and the productivity of the herd when it's handled correctly."

Producers will have to carefully consider if the price of feed is worth it. It may not be in their best interest to continue feeding high-priced hay or feed. They may want to sell down to a herd size that allows for limited hay needs and saves pasture health as well as the herd's health. This reduction may mean selling half or more of the cows and waiting three years to repopulate.

Crunching the numbers when it comes to nutrition is an integral part of a herd health program. Talk with your veterinarian today to build a program that's right for you. Learn more about the ways prevention works for your herd at bivipreventionworks.com. **HW**

— Article provided by
Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc.

Dr. Travis Van Anne



Facts about feed

- The price of hay is 85% correlated to the price of corn, so when corn prices increase, hay prices will do the same.
- A healthy cow facing no adverse weather conditions needs to eat 2% of her body weight per day on a dry-matter basis. That requirement means that a 1,350-1,400 lb. cow needs to eat 30 lb. of feed each day.
- It can cost as much as 50 cents per minute, including fuel, to run the equipment needed to get the feed to the cow's mouth.
- Waste and shrinkage can make a major dent in the volume that gets to the cow when compared to the volume purchased.
- Lick tubs provide a convenient supplemental feed but at a significantly higher price per unit of feed value.
- Alfalfa makes cows feel fuller (and happier) and helps them produce more heat units in times of cold stress.
- Alfalfa provides a high feed volume at an affordable price and often supplies 20 percent crude protein when routine feed analysis is performed.