Adams Advanced Nutrition, Inc.

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Questions & Answers on Rumensin® Use in Dairy Rations (Part II)

How should I introduce Rumensin® to a group of cows? Is gradual introduction required, or can I feed it at full rate from the start?

Cows should not demonstrate a significant reduction in feed intake when immediately introduced to a label-approved inclusion rate of Rumensin® (11-22 g/ton of total ration dry matter). At the higher end of this range, cows may decrease their feed intake by approximately 1 lb of dry matter (1.75-2.25%) for 1-2 days. By the third day following introduction, any slight reduction in feed intake should have completely disappeared. Significantly greater drops in intake suggest a mixing error may have occurred and the ration delivered to the cows may contain a much higher concentration of Rumensin® than the label-approved range.

Are there any palatability problems if I'm feeding Rumensin® in a top-dress?

Beyond the considerations discussed in the previous question, there should not be any palatability problems associated with the delivery of Rumensin® via a top-dress, assuming the top-dress is a palatable formulation. However, currently the FDA and ELANCO allow Rumensin® to be fed as an ingredient in a TMR. It is therefore illegal to feed Rumensin® to component-fed herds at the present time.

The "you may notice" section on the tag reports some negative effects on reproductive performance? Do the potential negative effects of feeding Rumensin® outweigh the potential positives??

Food and Drug Administration standards for the approval of new animal drugs (and/or new label approvals for existing animal drugs) now appear to approach standards for human drug approval in that any adverse or potentially negative effects observed during the approval trials must be included on the label. The negative reproductive effects reported from the US approval trials included reduced first service conception rate and increased days open, **but only in first-calf heifers receiving the 22 g/ton level** of Rumensin®. Overall, there was a trend toward lower conception rates and increased services per conception in Rumensin®-supplemented cows. However, pregnancy rates did not differ (*P*>0.10) between treated and control cows, and ranged between 18.7 and 21.5%. Furthermore, a substantial body of research data (in existence prior to the US approval trials) reports no negative reproductive effects associated with the administration of Rumensin®. When considering all existing data, the author would not discourage the use of Rumensin® from the standpoint of possible reductions in herd reproductive performance.

Continued on next column.

Why are the feeding directions provided on a 'gram per ton of total ration dry matter' basis rather than a cow dose of mg/head/day?

The wording of the feeding directions is a function of how the US approval trials were designed and how Rumensin® was delivered to the cows. Most of the Canadian data is based on studies where Rumensin® was delivered by an orally-administered, intraruminal, controlled-release capsule (CRC or CRC bolus) designed to release 335 mg of Rumensin® into the cow's rumen each day. By virtue of delivery method, many of the Canadian studies cite a mg/head/day dose, which makes more sense to many people. However, there is a legitimate rationale to providing a dose based on concentration in feed. In essence, the administration of Rumensin® treats the cow's rumen (specifically, the rumen's bacterial populations) rather than the cow. Rumen microbial populations are influenced not only by ration composition, but also the level of dry matter intake. Thus, the optimal Rumensin® dose probably is not fixed, but rather varies with and is positively correlated with feed intake. Higher intake facilitates higher rumen bacterial populations and a higher rate of feed passage through the rumen. Both of these considerations call for a higher level of Rumensin® intake in order to achieve the same effect in the rumen, and providing the ionophore on a gram per ton of dry matter basis addresses this issue.

(by Dr. R. Tom Bass, II, DVM, PhD, Renaissance Nutrition, Inc. 2005)

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Feeding (and planting) for results…

Cows cannot produce to their optimum level without a quality, balanced ration, along with good management (including cow comfort, fresh, clean water, etc.). A well-balanced ration includes your forages and those other ingredients necessary to ensure each cow is getting the nutrients and energy she needs to maintain condition and produce milk. It also impacts her health and reproductive abilities. When purchasing hybrids to plant this year, consider the nutrient and digestibility-value of available hybrids, since this will be the predominant part of the ration next fall and winter. I can help you examine all the available data and work with you to select what is best for your operation. And, I can work with you to ensure your entire herd are eating for results.

Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call me! My goal is to help you. That's Renaissance's commitment to you!

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MEGALAC®-R

In a 2004 on-farm trial conducted in Ohio, **Megalac®-R** was positioned to see what impact it would make toward improving herd reproductive performance at or below the national pregnancy rate… with a goal of 20% improvement! In the diet, ½ lb of **Megalac®-R** was used for all lactating cows, along with ¼ lb being added to the pre-fresh diet. The trial showed a 26% improvement over the same time period as the previous year, which included summer months. Get the facts and improve your pregnancy rates and reproductive performance.

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WHAT'S IT LIKE AROUND THE FARM?

Spring can be a very hectic time around the farm. As we come nearer to the beginning of spring, it is time to ensure everything is ready and in good working order before we undertake these tasks – plowing, disking and planting! Have you evaluated and purchased hybrids to plant? Do you have your seed on hand and ready to go? Is all the equipment serviced and ready to go, saving a lot of time and cost throughout this busy season? Being prepared will make a big difference on how smoothly things go in coming weeks. That is not to say that breakdowns and other issues won't arise. But it can reduce the incidence of difficulties and possibly give you more time to work on other things. And if you anticipate possible breakdowns or the need for specific equipment replacement parts – make sure these are either available when you need them or purchase them ahead in order to maximize your valuable time. Being prepared will make a difference!

A POINT TO PONDER...

"February goes out on cat paws, but March comes in like a lion." So goes the old adage about weather in March. One day the weather teases us with the anticipation of spring and on other days we feel the last cold grip of winter as it lingers on. With the coming rigors of spring planting and chores, it is important to keep safety in mind! While this should be a day-to-day consideration, it becomes more of an issue when the pace of life increases and we become preoccupied with work that must be accomplished. Take time to review safety needs and precautions with everyone on the farm and emphasize the need for care and caution in whatever tasks are undertaken. A safe farm is a good place to live and work.

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March into spring ~

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