

Preparing Your rations for the Summer
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After a long cold winter and a cool spring it is hard to believe, but it is time to start talking with your nutritionist about getting your rations ready for the summer and the inevitable heat stress that accompanies it. It varies from year to year but in Minnesota heat stress can start to have an effect on the production and reproduction of your herd in May. Remember for the cows heat stress can start as low as 70°F. To help the cows deal with heat stress it is recommended to positively DCAD (dietary cation anion difference) the ration. Research has shown that raising the DCAD level of the ration to 38-42 mEq/100 g can help maintain dry matter intake, production and butter fat under heat stress conditions. To do this you first need to have the minerals in the forages checked using wet chemistry. This is a more accurate way to measure them than traditional NIR and also have both sodium and chloride levels checked. Chloride levels in forages can vary widely from farm to farm and chloride decreases the DCAD level of the ration. Raising the DCAD level in the ration can be done by both increasing the amount of buffer fed and if potassium levels are under 1.4 % thru adding potassium carbonate or DCAD Plus™. It is recommended to use DCAD Plus™ over potassium carbonate or potassium chloride as potassium carbonate can cause the ration to heat in the presence of fat or excess moisture and potassium chloride does not increase the DCAD of the ration. Finally, when DCADing a ration it is best to increase it at least 10 mEq/100 g to see the best response and extra magnesium may be needed to maintain a 1:4 to 1:5 magnesium to potassium ratio. Another feed additive that can help in the summer is yeast culture. Yeast culture can increase fiber digestion along with supplying nutrients to maintain a normal healthy rumen population during heat stress.

Besides dealing with the heat in the summer cows also have to combat the flies and the discomfort that they cause. Last year a new feed thru larvicide product called ClariFly™ was made available. ClariFly™ is an insect growth regulator that can control house flies, stable flies, face flies and horn flies from developing in the manure of treated cattle. It is approved and available for all stages of cattle growth and lactation. Land O'Lakes Animal Milk has it available in both milk replacer and pasteurized milk balancer products to help control flies in and around the calf growing area. It is the only feed thru larvicide available for calves on milk or milk replacer.

Contact your local Centra Sota nutritionists to get more information on summer feeding strategies for your herd and ClariFly™.