

Animal health begins in the rumen

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When we think of animal health, what usually comes to mind are words like “disease,” “vaccination” and “issues.” The goal of any farm enterprise is to have healthy animals, as this is the cornerstone of any profitable farm system. Even from a labour point of view, the work involved in looking after one sick animal is the same as looking after 40 healthy animals, so prevention is most certainly better than cure. While the vet plays a vital role in the prevention and cure of animal health issues, nutrition can also be just as important.

Rumen health is one such issue that can cause a lot of problems on-farm if it is not managed properly, with the primary concern being acidosis. Concentrate feeding, better-quality silage and other ideas have pushed production higher, sometimes at the expense of the animal, but more importantly the rumen, or stomach, of the animal. As we push the quality of silage more and more, this ingredient that was once only used as a fibre source is now more of an energy source.

For this reason, fibre has become an even more important parameter when it comes to production. Simply put, fibre drives rumen health and counteracts the energy of the diet, which comes in the form of starch and sugars contained within grain, etc. Excesses of these types of energy can lead to acidosis in both dairy and beef cattle and lower butterfat for milk production. They can also lead to secondary issues like lameness. If we compromise the rumen of the animal, we are shutting down the engine and production, and weight gain will follow suit.

Balancing the diet for fibre, starch and sugar is important. It will give us the production that we need but not at the expense of rumen health. For those that are feeding a total mixed ration (TMR), you also need to make sure that this balanced diet is the one that is delivered to the animals. Making sure that the diet is consistent, chopping to the correct length to avoid sorting of the mix, using long fibre in the absence of effective/scratchy fibre and making sure it has the correct dry matter/moisture level are key requirements. A good diet feeder is a key part of this equation.

The KEENAN MechFiber difference

What exactly is different about the KEENAN system that allows the company to consistently deliver on its promise?

The KEENAN MechFiber range is unique in the proven nutritional benefits it delivers. The gentle mixing action of the KEENAN produces a unique, consistent ration structure call MechFiber, which when fed to the animal creates a stable rumen environment and has been scientifically proven to deliver a higher level of production, efficiently.

The use of the KEENAN controller with InTouch technology allows the operator to deliver this consistently every day. The InTouch support team will monitor progress, enabling you to make subtle changes should this deviate.

Altogether, this delivers significant production benefits for both beef and dairy systems.

Live Yeast for Rumen Health

We also need extra measures, such as using a live yeast to help rumen health, as we are dealing with 30- to 60-litre cows, where fibre levels and the forage to concentrate ratio will be low. This live yeast can help keep the acidity of the rumen under control and keep the rumen working in the absence of oxygen, which is best for the bacteria that digest feed. This will optimise rumen conditions for digestion and performance

Summary

- Getting rumen health correct is one of the most effective ways to enhance animal health.
- Balance fibre with energy and protein to achieve the desired production levels, but not at the expense of rumen health.