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POPULAR ARTICLE



Importance of Feed and Water on Dairy Farm Practices

Aakanksha Rathore¹ and Ramesh Kumar Singh²

¹Teaching Associate, LFC, College of Veterinary and Animal Science, Durg;

²Assistant Professor, Department of Animal Genetics and Breeding,
Bihar Veterinary College Patna (Bihar)

*Corresponding author: ramesh.kumarvet@gmail.com

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The dairy animal health and productivity both in terms quality and quantity as well as safety largely depend on quantity and quality of the feed and water offered to them. Both dry and green fodder alongwith concentrate is required to feed the animals. Provision of green fodder throughout the year will ensure the good health of the dairy animal. Therefore, it is very important to cultivate the fodder production throughout the year thereby to manage the nutrition and feeding of animals. The Good Management Practices (GMPs) for managing animal nutrition, feeding and watering are described as follows.

Plan ahead to ensure that the herd's water requirements are met. About 40 gallons of fresh water is required for drinking, bathing of each animal per day. Arrangement of sufficient quantity of fresh water managed from borewell or shallow tube well fitted with submersible pump. For production of green fodder throughout the year, irrigation system is required to be set up. Provision of borewell or shallow tube well is to be made for irrigation of fodder land. Implement sustainable nutrient, irrigation and pest management practices while growing feed.

For sustainable nutrition through green fodder different kinds of green fodder can be cultivated throughout the year. Leguminous fodder will be burseem, and lucerne, until can be cultivated in winter. Cowpea can be cultivated in summer & rainy. Non-leguminous fodder like oats can be cultivated in winter. Mustard can be cultivated alongwith oat as well as Berseem. Multicut sorghum and maize can be cultivated in summer. Besides, napier may also be cultivated. Once napier is cultivated it will continue to grow for 4-5 years. If cultivation of green fodder is done in well planned

way, then nutrient green fodder will be made available throughout the year in a sustainable manner.

Generally, pesticides or any kind of chemicals are not required for fodder production. The chemical fertilizer like Urea, DAP are required in recommended doses.

Due to shortage of green fodder, the nutrition requirement may be fulfilled by the concentrate feeds prepared by different companies are available in the market but it will be difficult for the farmers to examine the nutrient content of every time. Farmers may rely upon reputed company or they may prepare the feed of their own home grown ingredients or ingredients may be purchased from the market. This will ensure the quality of feed if it is prepared in consultation with the Animal Nutritionist or composition of feed may be obtained from the nearby Veterinary College or Veterinary Doctors posted in the block. For production of good quality fodder, the seeds of reputed / Branded company are required to be purchased from reputed suppliers.

Ensure animal feed and water are of suitable quantity and quality – Quantity and quality of feed is an important parameter for nutrition management of a dairy farm. So far quality is concerned, feed may be tested at regular interval in a standard lab, if feed ensure the nutritional needs of animals are met is purchased from the market. So far quantity is concerned a standard protocol should be followed depending upon the quantity and quality of green fodder available. The ration of concentrates and green fodder should be proper depending upon the availability of green fodder. On this regard an advice may be obtained from the Animal Nutritionist. The production of concentrate may vary depending upon body fat of the animal, cultivated green grasses, the animal is dry or lactating, quantity of milk given etc. if standard feeding schedule is maintained, this will ensure nutritional requirement of the animals. Ensure the feed fed to dairy animals is fit for purpose and will not negatively impact the quality or safety of their milk. Ensure suitable quality water is provided and the supply is regularly checked and maintained. Use different equipment for handling chemicals and feed stuffs. Ensure chemicals are used appropriately on pastures and forage crops and observe withholding periods.

Only approved chemicals may be used for treatment of animal feeds or component of animal feeds and observe withholding periods. Use of fertilizer or organic fertilizer is very safe. The inorganic fertilizers like Urea, DAP, Nitrogen phosphate are very safe of use in required quantity. The dry fodder like paddy straw may be treated with urea molasses but under any circumstances percentage of urea should not increase more than 3-4%.

Feeds intended for different species and even for physiological condition at the same species may be kept separately. Say for example, the composition and level of nutrition in calf starter is different from feed for grower & lactating animals.

Dry fodders are available at a cheaper rate when they are harvested. Dry ejet mouldy or sub-standard feed fodder like paddy straw is available in winter whereas wheat straw is available in summer. Therefore, it is better to purchase dry fodder at the specified season and store in a safer place for the entire year. Avoid to purchase dry fodder during rainy season. It came in contact with rain water, there will be every

possibility to grow fungus which will spoil the fodder & such spoiled dry fodder affect the animal health.

Concentrate feed should not be stored more than 2-3 months to avoid mold contamination which is responsible for aflatoxin. Hence, mouldy and sub-standard concentrate and dry fodder should be discarded to keep the animal healthy. Concentrate feed should be kept away from vermin as they contaminate the feed with harmful bacteria, virus and fungus. The vermin control measures may be adopted rather than using pest controlling chemicals. Pest control chemicals are poisonous which may be deadful to the life of dairy animals.

Ensure the traceability of feedstuffs brought on to the farm. Where possible, animal feed from suppliers having an approved quality assurance programme in place should be procured and keep records of all feed or feed ingredients received on the farm.