

## Vet's Corner: Marginal Value of Extra Dry Matter Intake

During the spring semester, Vermont 2x2 students are on the Miner Campus and full of stimulating questions and ideas. It is necessary to re-examine our old "rules of thumb" in these times of volatile milk prices and increasing feed costs to answer their queries. Recently the question arose: Is it profitable to push for increased dry matter intake in the face of escalating feed cost?

### MARGINAL VALUE OF EXTRA DRY MATTER INTAKE

	2006	2008	Difference
Lbs feed added "as fed"	2.00	2.00	
Percent dry matter	50%	50%	
Lbs of added dry matter	1.00	1.00	
Energy/lb in dry matter	0.78	0.78	
Lbs of milk supported	2.36	2.36	
<b>Price of milk per cwt</b>	<b>\$12.00</b>	<b>\$18.00</b>	<b>+\$6.00/cwt</b>
<b>Added milk revenue/cow/day</b>	<b>\$0.28</b>	<b>\$0.43</b>	<b>+ \$0.15/cow</b>
Feed cost per pound as fed	\$0.03	\$0.05	
<b>Added feed cost /cow/day</b>	<b>\$0.06</b>	<b>\$0.10</b>	<b>+\$0.04/day</b>
<b>Added profit cow/day</b>	<b>\$0.22</b>	<b>\$0.33</b>	<b>+\$0.11/day</b>
Cows in herd	300	300	
Days of milk per year	300	300	

**Extra profit per year per herd    \$20,127    \$29,291    +\$9,164**

In the past two years, average milk price rose \$6.00/cwt and the cost of a pound of dry matter has risen \$0.04 or 67%. This year, despite the increased feed cost, \$9,164 extra profit was rewarded for increasing DMI compared to two years ago, before feed costs took off.

The student discussion proceeded to listing factors that will maximize feed intake:

1. High quality roughage that is not too high in fiber, moldy, or spoiled.
2. Excellent water cleanliness and availability.
3. Control heat stress and provide excellent ventilation.
4. Observe strict feed time schedules and increase number of feedings.
5. Never allow the bunk to go empty.
6. Frequent bunk push-ups and refused feed removal before delivery.
7. Avoid over crowding which leads to inadequate bunk space.
8. Address lame cow treatment and prevention.

Kent Henderson, DVM  
 Northwest Veterinary Associates, Inc.  
[Hugamoo@comcast.net](mailto:Hugamoo@comcast.net)

