

October 2011

USA Dairy Study Tour to Wisconsin- by John Cammack

I have recently returned from a study tour to Wisconsin, the second largest dairy state in the USA. This trip was jointly organised by Zinpro (a large feed mineral company), and Advanced Ruminant Nutrition, (a UK based company).

Wisconsin produces 14% of the milk in the USA on a variety of farm types from high yielding 3,500 cow dairies, to 50 cow tie stall housed family units and 20 cow Amish dairy farms where the cows are hand milked as their religion prohibits the use of electricity.



The all the year round calving large herds were all high yielding with herd averages of 14,000 litres of milk and **average** daily milk production of up to 45 litres.

Milk price can be very volatile in the USA .It currently stands at 30p per litre but in 2009 was

as low as 13p per litre. A fresh calved heifer costs £1100 and a cull cow makes up to £650.

How are such high daily yields achieved?

- **Nutrition and feed management-**a consistent, high quality TMR is made using maize silage and alfalfa haylage, crimped maize, rapeseed and soya meal, whey and blood meal derived from pigs and ruminants! There is always TMR in front of the cow which is pushed up every 3 hours. Troughs are cleaned daily.
- **Cow Comfort-**All the large herds are milked three times a day and housed in deep bedded sand cubicles. A lot of the units are recycling sand but with time this leads to a grittier sand which is causing thin soles in the cows. Rubber matting in the walkways is being introduced to reduce this problem. All the sheds are very well ventilated and fitted with fans and misters as heat and humidity cause problems in the summer months with milk yield and fertility suffering.



- **Staff** - there is a large, willing workforce of mostly Hispanic people who are trained to do set jobs such as calving and colostrum feeding of calves or just pre dipping for an 8 hour milking shift. There is a relatively high staff ratio of 1 man per 50 cows.
- **Bovine Somatotropin (BST)** - BST is widely used in the high yielding herds. BST increases the efficiency of conversion of feed into milk and will usually produce a yield increase of 10%. Cows are injected every 14 days from 60-70 days in milk until the end of lactation. A single injection of BST costs £4 per cow.
- **Rumensin** - Rumensin is added to the TMR and increases milk production efficiency by altering the ruminal fermentation so more energy is produced per kilo of food eaten.

DIY AI Course

Gill will be running one of her popular DIY AI courses in late October/ early November. To maximise the practical experience of the participants the course will be restricted to five people. If you would like to register for this

course please contact the Farm office or if you require more information speak to Gill directly.



TB testing and XLVets Farmcare

You may be aware that DEFRA Animal Health is looking to change the way TB testing is delivered by putting the testing out for competitive tender. In the future it maybe that TB tests are not performed by vets from a farms own veterinary practice.

We have established XL Vets Farmcare with two other XL vets practices in the West Midlands to try and develop a model to help our future tender. Until the tender process has been completed we will continue to do the TB tests for our clients allocated to us by DEFRA.

If you receive paperwork from DEFRA stating that you need to contact XLFarmcare, please do not panic, continue to contact us as normal!

Forthcoming Mastitis Workshop

We are holding a mastitis workshop, covering all practical aspects of Environmental Mastitis on Wednesday 16th November, at a farm (venue yet to be confirmed) from 11.00am to 2.00pm. Lunch and course notes will be provided. There will be ample time for active discussion within a small working group.

A nominal charge of £25 will be required if you would like to attend. Please contact the farm office for more details.