Quick solutions when the price of concentrates is high

- May 3, 2022

You've probably noticed it on your bills: for several months now, the price of concentrates has been particularly high. Various factors explain this trend, but the escalating war in Ukraine has amplified the problem by having a significant effect on the price of grain and fuel. What concrete solutions can help reduce the impact of high prices on your feed margin?



These are difficult times for all farmers around the world given the effect of this war and how it’s affected the cost of all inputs. Of course, special thought must be given to our colleagues in Ukraine, who are trying to feed the world while having to cohabit with war machinery in their fields… How long will this last? Nobody knows, and for the time being we have very little control over it. Instead, we should focus on what we can control.

What we can control

The first step in mitigating the impact of this crisis is to know how your operation is doing in this situation. Feed costs are rising on all farms, but have they risen more on your farm than elsewhere? Calculating your operation’s feed margin will answer this question. Thanks to our database that gathers information from several hundred farms in Quebec, all suppliers included, you’ll be able to easily compare yourself with others.

Once you’ve done this, shift into solution mode and try to minimize feed costs as much as possible while maximizing cow production for the same level of concentrate. We’ve compiled below a checklist of items that could improve your farm’s situation. This list starts with the things that are

easy to implement and get results quickly. We tend to think that simple solutions cannot have significant effects, but it can often be just the opposite!

1. Calibrate the concentrate dispenser and mixer;
2. Re-use weigh backs for heifers;
3. Sharpen mixer knives regularly (check every three months, or as needed);
4. Check the grinding and digestion of the grain;
5. Re-evaluate feed bunk management;
6. Evaluate forage consumption/substitution and its effects;
7. Review cow grouping;
8. Review heifer feeding;
9. Re-evaluate feed choices (price versus nutritional value);
10. Evaluate the relevance of additives;
11. Review management of supplies:
    a. Quantities ordered
    b. Cost-effective format
    c. Discounts
12. Sample forages regularly:
    a. Every batch, and at least once a month (increase frequency for larger herds)
    b. Watch our series of videos for a reminder of sampling techniques.

What's Next?

Once you've chosen a few practical solutions for your operation, you'll need to try them out and keep a close eye on your feed margin while you do so. This will allow you to see if your efforts have been rewarded.



By Jean-Philippe Laroche, agr., M. Sc.

Jean-Philippe who grew up on a dairy farm is particularly interested in forage valorization by ruminants. Member of l'Ordre des agronomes, he graduated in agronomy from Laval University in 2018 and also completed a Master's degree in animal sciences, during which he received several distinctions.