

## "THERE IS NO I IN TEAM"



By Teresa Hanson, B.S.

"There is no I in team." Many of us have heard this saying before. A team's success depends on the collaborative efforts of all of its members. As a dairy nutritionist, I am one team member, out of

many, that help dairy farmers. This last January, I started nutrition work with a family dairy farm in Boyceville, WI. This 220-cow dairy has experienced the benefits of the Crystal Creek Dairy Nutrition Model (CCDNM) by successfully implementing seven key factors in their dairy.

### 1. Build a Dedicated Support Team

Dairy farmers are very busy people and most do not have time to keep abreast with many of the changing and challenging topics relating to their dairy farm. Smart farmers utilize the resources of knowledgeable industry professionals to guide, educate and discuss various topics that relate to their farm's success. This support team should include key family members, friends, nutritionist, veterinarian, agronomist, milking system specialist, banker and accountant. Each team member should keep an open mind and work towards the end goal of the farm's success.

### 2. Develop A Sustainable Nutrition Model

Since the dairy's nutrition program is at the very core of its success, the team needs to develop a nutrition model that keeps the farm sustainable. The CCDNM is a nutrition model that focuses on improving farmer profitability and maintaining farm sustainability. This model recognizes the importance of forage and nutrient bio-availability to support cow health. Many producers on the CCDNM are seeing increased profits ranging from \$300 to \$600 per cow per year along with improved herd health and reproduction.

### 3. Set Goals/ Create an Action Plan

Set realistic goals and evaluate return on investment. For example, a high rolling herd average does not necessarily mean more profit for the dairy farmer, nor does low price per bag of mineral mean it's a good deal. Evaluate herd health and strive to improve critical issues that are continually problematic (i.e. transition cow performance, foot health, reproductive issues).

### 4. Communication

Communication is by far one of the most important factors that will determine the success achieved on the dairy farm. The team's success depends on knowing what is going on at your farm in a timely manner. Let your nutritionist know when there are intake changes or if the manure consistency changes. There can rarely be too much communication. At times, daily calls may be warranted. Strive to continually develop good communication practices on your farm.

### 5. Awareness/ Observation Skills

At Crystal Creek, we try to educate our producers to become more aware of important changes and issues on the dairy farm so they can make well informed decisions. Observation of manure consistency and/ or contents, animal body condition, dry matter intake and mold in forages are critical pieces of information each producer needs to be evaluating and sharing with their Crystal Creek Nutritionist so that the proper action can be taken. Many producers also test forages on a regular basis to maintain ration accuracy.

### 6. Follow Directions

Nutritionists are the part of your support team that can directly influence milk production, herd health and herd profitability. The ration your nutritionist gives you is directly related to the goals you set and the action plan you are performing. Follow the ration as directed to achieve the most success. It is impossible to reach goals if the ration is not followed correctly.

### 7. Monitor Performance

Factor #3 states that it is important to set goals. These goals need to be evaluated for progress at regularly determined intervals. Do not wait years down the road to evaluate a ration program. Various levels of evaluation should occur quarterly and annually. Many

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producers on the CCDNM evaluate total profitability, out-of-pocket cost savings, herd health, dry matter intake, manure consistency, body condition and milk production. Evaluation is usually done as a team so everyone is on the same page.

These seven key factors have helped many of our Crystal Creek dairy nutrition clients over the years, including this 220-cow dairy from Boyceville. Owners of this farm are dedicated and excellent dairy farmers. They came to a Crystal Creek meeting in the Spring of 2011 and left the meeting recognizing that they were not on the right path to keep their dairy farm sustainable with their current nutrition program. Change can be difficult and this couple was apprehensive to make any changes. However, they asked lots of questions, followed their hearts and over time, they developed the confidence and a strategy to change over to the CCDNM. Below, I have compiled their successes in profitability and herd health over the first four months on the CCDNM. The number one reason this herd was successful in reaching their goals was their excellent communication. This great communication allowed us to develop a solid plan that was implemented by the producers on a timely basis. This producer contacts me anytime there is manure consistency or dry matter intake change. Forages are tested on a regular basis or any time a new bunker is opened. By implementing the above seven key factors, this farm continues to achieve their overall goals of increased profits and improved herd health.

Make Crystal Creek a part of your team today!

Figure 1

|  | Total Improved<br>Ration Profitability<br>(4 Months on CCDNM) | Out-of-Pocket<br>Expense Savings<br>(4 Months on CCDNM) |
|--|---|---|
| <b>PER HEAD PER DAY</b>                          |   |   |
| Fresh Cow  | \$0.39  | \$0.76  |
| Lactating Cow                                    | \$0.40  | \$0.63  |
| Dry Cow  | \$0.26  | \$0.41  |
| <b>PER GROUP PER DAY</b>                         |   |   |
| Fresh Cow  | \$7.80  | \$15.20   |
| Lactating Cow                                    | \$84.80   | \$133.56  |
| Dry Cow  | \$5.20  | \$8.20  |
| <b>PER GROUP PER YEAR</b>                        |   |   |
| Fresh Cow  | \$2847.00   | \$5,548.00  |
| Lactating Cow                                    | \$30,952.00   | \$48,749.40   |
| Dry Cow  | \$1898.00   | \$2,993.00  |
| Additional Ration<br>Profit/Herd/Year            | \$35,697.39   |   |
| Additional Ration<br>Profit/Cow/Year             | \$141.65  |   |
| Total Out-of-Pocket Savings<br>Per Herd Per Year |   | \$57,290.40   |
| Total Out-of-Pocket Savings<br>Per Cow Per Year  |   | \$227.34  |

### Herd Health Evaluation (Early Overview):

|                               | Before CCDNM | After 1st 4 Months On CCDNM |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Total Post-Partum Treatments* | 30%          | 7%                          |
| IV Milk Fevers                |              | Only 2 Since Start Of CCDNM |
| Body Condition Scores         | 2.9          | 3.3                         |
| Somatic Cell Count            | 106,000      | 76,000                      |
| Cows On Quarter Milker        | 15           | 5                           |

### Other Observations\*\*:

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Heats                    |   | Improved  |
| Reproduction             |   | Fewer Repeat Breedings                                |
| Retained Placenta (RP's) |   | Only 1 Since Start Of CCDNM                           |
| Foot Health              | Hairy Warts, Ulcers, Abscesses                            | Early Indications Of Improvement Are Good             |
| Metabolic Issues         | Feed Sorting, Sub-acute Acidosis,<br>Sub-clinical Ketosis | Minimal Feed Sorting,<br>Reduced Acidosis and Ketosis |

### Dry Matter Intake :

|                     |       |       |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Fresh Cow Group     | 38.38 | 46.48 |
| Lactating Cow Group | 46.60 | 50.06 |

\* Transition cow problems, i.e. milk fever, ketosis, off-feed, enema kits, RP's. , \*\* Final statistics will be available later this year.