



Tips for May 2010

Falling Milk Butterfat

May 2010 has started with a widespread problem of low milk fat. Many herds are experiencing butterfat percentages as low as milk protein percentages or indeed lower. Part of this may be explained by a lack of structural fibre in the diet and this may lead to low rumen pH and ruminal acidosis.

Paddocks for early-mid May will contain very lush, leafy grass with very little structural fibre. This grass is very high DMD, recent analysis conducted by Bretts show values of approximately 90% DMD. In many herds this problem will resolve itself as the fibre content in grass increases over the next couple of weeks. However it is advisable to take measures to correct this problem. Please see below some useful tips as to how to maximise milk fats.

Tips for increasing Butterfat levels

1. A small amount of good quality hay, roughly chopped straw (>4cm) or some unchopped round bales may help to rectify the problem. This could be offered as cows are in the collecting yard or leaving the parlour. In general herds that have been offering a buffer feed have not experienced the same decline in milk fats as those offering no alternative forage/roughage. The use of a buffer feed at milking time can also give good results, such examples are whole crop wheat, maize silage or silage and chopped straw.
2. Inclusion of a rumen buffer product in the ration being fed to cows. If using a buffering product make sure that the product is included at the recommended level. The process of cud chewing in the cow produces sodium bicarbonate that naturally buffers the rumen. Therefore it is most important to achieve step 1 in a bid to maximise cud chewing.
3. Grazing rations at this time of year should be based on a high proportion of fibrous ingredients such as soya hulls and beet/citrus pulp. Wheat feed and palm kernel also help to provide an effective source of fibre content in the diet.