

Management of Reticuloruminal pH in Modern Dairy Herds

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Modern dairy farm management focuses on the control, optimization and monitoring of interconnected processes to enable and enhance productivity of the dairy herd. The operations and decisions involved in farm management rely on information about the farm and/or the dairy cows and the expertise of farm management staff in drawing the correct conclusions based on the available data. In recent years, new technologies have emerged enabling the inclusion of new parameters as well as the interpretation of the available data to improve farm management. The important role played by nutrition in dairy cow health and productivity makes optimal feeding management a key factor impacting dairy farm profitability. The timely and precise reaction to irregularities in feeding management, which can lead to diet-related diseases like SARA (sub-acute ruminal acidosis) or off-feed syndrome, is therefore of vital importance. Apart from the widely accepted method of detecting SARA by measuring the duration of periods below a certain pH level, it is clear that the daily patterns of reticuloruminal pH provide very useful information for feeding and health management. Reticuloruminal pH is sensitive to temporary changes in feeding times as well of course in diet composition and health status of the animals. It therefore makes sense to include pH data to drive, optimize, and monitor feeding management in a more effective way. We measure reticuloruminal pH in numerous dairy herds worldwide and show farmers and advisors how to work with this parameter on a day-to-day basis in order to improve feeding management. Particularly in the transition period, and especially due to the significance of SARA at this time, the management of reticuloruminal pH is shown to increase herd health and enhance farm profitability.

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