

Feeding Milk to Cows?

Tom Overton, Mike Van Amburgh, and Rob Lynch
Department of Animal Science and PRO-DAIRY
Cornell University

Over the past week, with dairy farms dumping milk and/or being asked to decrease milk shipped by as much as 20%, the topic of feeding milk back to lactating cows and/or replacement heifers has been raised. Dr. Matt Akins and Liz Binversie with the University of Wisconsin prepared an article that we are sharing but are also providing the following key points in addition.

- In New York State, a dairy farm can feed milk back to its own animals. However, if Grade A milk from one farm were to be fed to animals on a different farm, it would need to be tested per Appendix N of the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance by an independent laboratory or milk processor (on-farm testing not sufficient) prior to feeding.
- The same characteristics that make milk an excellent source of nutrients for people also make it a rich source of nutrients to support microbial growth. Monitoring stability of the TMR (smell, heating) and ensuring that refusals are discarded and not refed would be management considerations.
- Unpasteurized milk can be a source of pathogens. Among others, of concern would be *Salmonella Dublin* and *Salmonella Newport*. A best practice would be to conduct a bulk tank culture to understand risks on an individual farm. Regardless, attention to milking hygiene should be high in order to decrease bacterial load.
- Milk likely cannot be added to the ration in amounts leading to TMR dry matter being less than 42 to 44%, which means that a dairy farm feeding whey currently typically would not feed both whey and milk. The amount of milk that can be added without causing instability/spoilage issues in the TMR likely will vary from farm to farm.
- Consider adding approved acids or preservatives to milk or in the TMR to prolong stability. An extension guide can be found at extension.psu.edu/feeding-acidified-milk-to-calves. As a reminder, formic acid is not approved by FDA as an acidifying agent for milk and should not be used.
- We suggest that farms consult their nutritionist and veterinarian for additional guidance on nutritional value and food safety.

The article from the University of Wisconsin, Madison can be found at:

calumet.extension.wisc.edu/files/2020/04/Feeding-Unpasteurized-Milk-to-the-Dairy-Herd.pdf

