



PRIORITY REPORT

Volume 38

For Healthy Cows®

Fed Up! We Went a Different Way

"Our story with Priority started over 10 years ago. I saw an ad in a magazine and the *For Healthy Cows*® caught my attention. I contacted our local representative, Bill Indoe, as we were having issues with cow health. He came out and explained the program and we started on P-One™ and DCP™ immediately," shares Jay Hein of Nor-J Farms.

Nor-J Farms is a 120-cow dairy in Ohio, where Jay, his wife Norma, his son Jake and Jake's wife Megan work to continue the family farm into the third and fourth generation. What resonated back then, the concept of microbiology and the unique genetics that were available as *Smart bacteria* with Priority products, are among the building blocks that moved Nor-J Farms forward.

"We did this for a number of years and saw improvements in the herd. We were making progress, but we were looking for that next step for improvement," recalls Jay as he had wrestled with finding a nutritionist that would do the ration the way he wanted, reducing the percent of crude protein and feeding for MUNs below a 10.

"We had tossed around the idea of Priority doing our ration for some time, but we always felt like we needed that nutritionist coming to the farm and telling us how to feed our cows," shares Jake.

No Roadblocks with a Priority Ration

"A few years ago I attended World Dairy Expo and met with Richard Breunig. I told him we wanted to make ration changes. We're going to do this, we had to do this," recalls Jake. "I told Richard we wanted to ease into it and keep straw in the diet. Richard asked me, 'Why do you want to feed them a roadblock?' That question stunned me."

With the explanation on how straw takes out something the cow can use in the diet, like a high quality forage, and replaces it with something the cow cannot use, Jake connected with how it was a roadblock that was setting the herd back. When they looked at the ration options that Priority proposed, the Heins made the change to a dry cow Priority ration with no straw.

"I was very uneasy about making the change," recalls Jay. "But we did it. I was worried because if the dry cow ration doesn't work, everything after it doesn't work right."

"But it worked. The explanation and then the results made sense. Ketosis dropped dramatically and we hardly have any metabolic issues – They are next to none," shares Jake.

Where: Nor-J Farms

Cows: 120 cows **Time on P-One™:** 10 years

Results: Reduced feed costs, improved reproduction, better transition periods, and reduced cull rates.

Production: 84 lb. tank average with 4.35% butterfat and 3.4% protein with 154 DIM.

Of the first 100 cows to calve in after the Heins made the switch to the Priority ration, 95 out of a 100 cows cleaned, three of the cows that didn't clean were on the ration for just a few weeks in their dry period. Additionally, in the first 100 cows there was one case of ketosis and two milk fevers.

"I was so accustomed to having DAs, ketosis, and milk fever issues. I thought everyone has it and has to go through it. That it was the normal – Well I can tell you it doesn't have to be the normal once you understand there is a better way," recalls Jay. "The dry cow program is clicking so well. When you get them to calve in and go through the transition without any issues, they simply take off."

Today the dry cow ration is about as basic as it comes with dry hay, corn silage, and a mineral mix that the Heins blend on the farm.

Priority Ration for Milk Cows

Shortly after implementing the dry cow ration, the Heins made some big changes to the lactating cow diet by using a Priority ration.

"We were making really good forages. Our nutritionist had used the same solution to add straw into the TMR. That was their feel good solution because we made such good forages, they didn't know how to handle it," says Jay.

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“Our old nutritionist told us we needed to add straw in the milk cow diet because we were making too good of forages. Even though that’s what he told us to do,” shares Jake. “When I asked to take bean meal out instead, the response was always no.”

“Nutritionists today are scared to feed that kind of energy. They simply won’t because they can’t and they don’t have the know-how. Feeding P-One™ we can make these forages work. Therefore, our cows have the energy to show heats, to make milk, and to maintain health,” says Jay.

The *Smart bacteria* in the P-One Program™ is research proven to stabilize and maintain pH, effectively using the rapidly fermentable carbohydrates available in high quality forages like the Heins make. Fed daily, P-One™ unifies the rumen to create a Smart microbiome optimizing energy transport through efficient carbohydrates metabolism.

“When we switched from a straw diet to the Priority ration, there was 23 different ingredients just in the old mineral mix. Today the Priority diet is six mineral ingredients with corn silage and hay,” notes Jake. “It’s amazing how simple it is. We used to have the mill make our mineral pack, but now we just buy the individual ingredients. There are so few ingredients and I make sure the right amount goes in every time. It’s not only a cost savings, but helps us be very particular so I can be dead on every day for every cow. Part of the milk production is that we are consistently, consistent with how we do things. We’re eliminating outside variables.”

“I think nutritionists love the straw diets because it makes them a lot of money. They can sell a lot of ingredients,” comments Jay. “For us, using the P-One Program™ the feed cost savings is there... We know we are saving money on the P-One Program™. But everything is so much better, has progressed so dramatically, that it’s hard to believe.”

“We made some huge changes and it’s been a climb. I remember when I used to think a 70 lb. tank was ‘holy smokes’ I didn’t think we could do that,” recalls Jake. “As we started this process with Priority, I used to think 80 lbs. a day was unachievable. Well now, I’m saying that about 90 lbs. because we are progressing so much.”

Prior to P-One™, the Heins were at a 65-70 lb. tank average. With the P-One Program™, they have reached an 84 lb. tank average on 2x milking. The Heins are continuing to look forward to their next step and next improvement that can take another roadblock out of their path.

“Now looking back, it’s really frustrating to see the money we lost and the cows we’ve lost when we were doing what we thought was our only option. It’s so frustrating that the nutrition world of today will tell you that everyone has DAs and sick cows – No they don’t, or at least they don’t have to,” says Jay. “But then again, change is not easy.”

“Everyone is so accustomed to straw in the diet, we’d been doing it for so many years. I’m really happy we got away from it. The Priority ration improved our herd health overall,” shares Jake.

Feeding for Health

The rolling herd average at Nor-J Farm is at 27,640 pounds of milk with 4.35% butterfat, 1090 pounds of fat, and 3.4% protein at 154 days in milk.

“The MUNs are 5-8, never over 8. I just don’t like them being over that knowing that’s an expense we don’t need,” shares Jakes. “We ran an MUN of 5 for the longest time.”

“It used to frustrate me so badly, when the nutritionist would come around and tell me that MUNs cannot be that low because you’ll lose pregnancies, you’ll lose milk. They’d recommend levels of 12, 15, even 18. I’ve even had a vet say an 18 MUN is healthy. But they are wrong. It’s money wasted. We know it now, but it’s really hard to convince someone of that when it has been their normal for so long. But we were there, we remember,” recalls Jay.

“Foot health is another thing we’ve noticed. Our hoof trimmer has made a lot of comments to us as we trim the entire herd twice a year. Last trimming in November we did 150 cows and put on one block,” recalls Jake. “Putting blocks on, cows limping used to be a pretty regular thing before the P-One Program™. Now because our MUNs are low, we don’t have that excess coming out through the feet because we aren’t feeding that excess protein.”

Reproduction Improvement

“Now we are consistently in the 150-180 day range because we improved reproduction. It was really hard to do previously, it always seemed like we had cows that were heavy milkers getting out there in days and we couldn’t get them bred or get them to show heats,” states Jakes.

“Cows showing heats is huge. I’ve heard it from nutritionists and veterinarians, they say we have bred it out of them, but that’s not correct. We have not bred it out of our cows, it’s all in the ration... We now have cows cycling and showing strong heats,” states Jay. “Just to drive the point home, we had a cow come in heat at 102 days in milk. She’s making over 140 pounds of milk a day. She came in heat on her own, no luteal, no ovsynch. It is achievable.”

Not only is this 140 pound milker pregnant on her first service, but pregnancy checks across the whole herd are going great. In fact the Heins’ last two checks were both 17 pregnant out of 18 and the month prior to that they were 11 out of 11 and 22 out of 23 pregnant.

“With having such a good conception rate and everything working well, we are selling about 20% of the herd each spring to other dairies. It helps our cash flow dramatically. We can move the younger cows,” shares Jay.

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The Nor-J Farms crew from left to right in the back row is Jay, Norma, Megan holding baby Charles, and Jake Hein. Front row is Jake and Megan's daughters Kenley and Olivia.



By Richard V. Breunig,
President and Founder

Variability Commands Change

Variability is an ongoing challenge for dairy producers, even more so in 2018. It's not just the variation in price of milk, cattle, land, and rent. Nor is it the variations of feed costs increasing or how profit margins are diminishing. The variability in the marketplace has created a perfect storm that can leave one in a state of fear. Fear that the next change could mean the end. Or worse, knowing what should be done and simply fearing to take action.

Variability means lack of consistency or fixed pattern; liability to vary or change. However, change can also be interchanged with evolve. Everything is constantly evolving or changing. We can't keep doing the things that got us to this point or continue to do the same things we have done in the past. Take for example how fiber should be reevaluated. Fiber has two parts what is unusable, or wood which is like straw, and what is usable, termed fermentable fiber. When cow health issues occur we tend to want to use the wood portion as a means of fiber. Rather, we should figure out how to use only the fermentable fiber, which affects the volume and the rate the rumen ferments.

Recognize when all fiber fed is fermentable, health issues could increase with the increased total load of carbohydrates. If we harvest early maturity and process - Everything fed is extremely fermentable. While feeding rapidly fermentable carbohydrates is the accepted way to maximize milk production, the rapid fermentation can have a negative impact on digestion as variations of intakes have a negative impact.

Variable Manure Syndrome (VMS) is so common today that most people think it is normal for cows to have inconsistent manure. With TMR feeding, each cow eats the same diet, yet each cow doesn't have the same manure consistency. This inconsistency, or variability, indicates that something has gone wrong in the digestion process. These variations in manure can appear as undigested feeds and whole grains passed in the manure or even watery,

foamy, and bloody feces. Often VMS is found in a herd, on the same day, within the same group, without ration changes. We expect that cows fed the same diet would perform and respond the same way to the same feed - Yet that isn't the case.

Research has shown that each cow has its own unique microbiome, or bacteria community, much like we do. Studies have shown when rumen contents are moved from one cow to the other, it only takes a short period of time before the microbiome reverts back to its original state. With this awareness, there is some light shed on why a group of cows fed the same TMR diet won't have the same manure consistency or rumen function. Every body function and immunity correlates back to digestive health.

Microbiology - Microbiomes vary from cow to cow, there simply are not enough of specific strains of bacteria to metabolize and transport the rapid rate and volume of rapidly fermentable carbohydrates. Microbiology is the first step that does this work. In the rumen, bacteria do all the work, just as bacteria have important roles in the soil and in us. There are more microorganisms in a teaspoon of soil than people on the face of the Earth. There are more than a trillion microorganisms in a mere ounce of rumen fluid - But are they the right ones?

Knowing the bacteria community is different from cow to cow and the

volume of carbohydrates fed is an issue, integrating microbiology with nutrition is the solution. The growth of microorganisms is correlated to pH; rumen pH stability is the key to this life. The first ingredient in dairy nutrition has to be finding a way to keep the rumen pH stable to maximize the fermentable portion of ALL carbohydrates, producing the maximum output of VFAs (energy) and microbial protein (protein/amino acids). All this is done through microbiology, stable pH, and optimum level and balance of carbon and nitrogen. Rumen pH has a tight window of 5.8 to 6.6 for ideal rumen function and optimum bacteria growth. On the pH scale, a seemingly small movement of 0.1 from 6 to 5.9 is actually a 1-fold change, which represents 100% increase in acidity. Imagine how we would respond if we suddenly had a 100% increase in acid!

Microbiology to manage variability; the P-One Program™ delivers unique genetics available as *Smart bacteria*. A4000h™ and A2020™ are branded strains to metabolize and transport carbohydrates efficiently and find commonality. Delivered in a small amount, but huge in the terms of numbers; microbiology is the key to nutrition - the key to all life.

the P-One Program™ stabilizes and maintains rumen pH with unique, branded strains of *Smart bacteria*.

Your 1st Ingredient™ *For Healthy Cows*®. - truly remarkable products!



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The Heins average 1.6 services per conception in their milking herd. This compares to 1.8 services per conception in their heifers – This tends to be higher because the heifers receive their first two services to sexed semen or an embryo.

Making Good Forages

With a different approach to feeding, as the P-One Program™ can embrace and maximize their high quality forages, the Heins are pushing to make even better homegrown feeds.

“Corn silage has to be 70% moisture or above. We make our forages wetter. When we used to chop corn silage we wanted to get as much stalk as possible, now we leave 12-14 inches in the field,” shares Jake. “We’re making our hay in tighter windows, trying to get more quality out of it. We’re chopping our hay, we used to do all baleage. That’s been huge for us,” shares Jake.

“Make it wet. It’s so much more fermentable when you have that kind of moisture,” recommends Jay. “It’s ironic that nutritionists will tell us not to make it over 70% moisture. Yet, they cannot figure out why they have so much mold in the bags and bunkers. It’s because they are not getting a good fermentation of the crop because they don’t have the moisture.”

“We use just the Chopper’s Choice™ basic dry inoculant, but it has proven to be worthwhile. Like everything else, I had my doubts, but it has proven to be very cost effective,” shares Jay. “We used to add on propionic acid. Not only is it very expensive, but as I’ve learned it kills all the good bugs that you need to get the fermentation done right.”

Feeding Heifers with Priority

Priority’s approach is a one-group heifer ration to push along development and calve earlier than in the past was the next step for the Heins. Having used this approach for 14-months, they see their heifers reach their mature weight quicker.

“We do a TMR for the heifers, breeding and bred heifers are all one group. We are consistently calving heifers in at 22-23 months old. They are big, but not fat – They are well-grown,” comments Jay. “They calve in so much easier.”

Opportunities Available

Call for details.



888-444-2030

info@forhealthycows.com

“The heifer diet that Priority does has made a dramatic difference in how they are growing. We’ve been on this diet for 14 months and now have 2-year-olds coming into milk that are reaching for a 35,000 pound mark. We never had that before, ever,” reflects Jake. “Before a good one would do 25,000-28,000 pounds, but now they are consistently higher. I would attribute a lot of this to the way we are feeding them now. We’re getting them ready to come into milk production faster, they are more well-suited to perform.”

“They have plenty of body and size as a young 2-year-old to handle milking,” shares Jay. “They are plenty big enough to start breeding at 12 months. The way they are growing on the diet, we can expose them a lot sooner.”

Join Priority

With Jake’s growing involvement on the farm, Jay is working towards helping more farmers as he became an Authorized Reseller for Priority IAC.

“Anything Richard has ever offered to us as a suggestion to get milk production, we have done it,” shares Jay. “After seeing firsthand what we were missing out on by using a straw diet, we’re going to listen to this guy – We’re going to follow Priority’s recommendations.”

“You have to have an open mind with how you do things today. Working with Priority has definitely helped us progress in the right direction today. With Richard’s resume and what he accomplished at Clover-Mist, that’s huge. I look at what he did there and I want to glean what I can. The production he got and the kind of cows that he developed,” shares Jake. “It all goes back to my meeting with Richard, when he explained the straw diet being nothing but a roadblock. After we changed the dry cow diet, it’s like the gates opened. We’ve been taught the wrong way forever, there is a better way! This is the better way and we’re going to do it.”

“Priority is very knowledgeable about cows and nutrition. They know what is going on and are focused on educating, and that’s huge,” states Jay.