

Adding Pressed Sugar Beet Pulp to Your Dairy Herd's Ration

By Mindy Pratt

There are so many ingredient options available to include in a dairy herd's Total Mixed Ration (TMR) that most dairy farmers turn to a nutritionist to help customize the mix for their herd's specific needs.

Many nutritionists and dairy farmers in Michigan are using pressed sugar beet pulp in their TMR for a number of reasons: moisture, palatability, cost, or to stretch corn silage. Several producers also claim the pressed beet pulp can raise milk production and increase butterfat content.

"We started using pressed beet pulp to replace corn silage," says

MMPA member Leroy Schafer, who milks 120 cows with his wife, Stephanie in Pewamo. "It saved us money and made us a lot of milk too. It seems like we gain about 5-7 pounds of milk per cow per day when we started feeding it."

MMPA producer Joe Sharrard, who milks 500 cows in partnership with his brother Ken, in Peck, agrees. He says it seems to help the butterfat content when they start feeding it in the fall. Steve Good, a nutritionist at Vita Plus for the past 15 years, adds he has noticed that dairy herds tend to have healthier cattle with less foot problems when fed pressed beet pulp as part of their ration.

"We have been feeding beet pulp for 6 years now," Joe says. "We feel it is a good value and fits in well with our ration of corn silage, haylage, high-moisture corn and a complete dairy pellet. We feed it to all of our cattle."

"Pressed beet pulp is a very consistent source of fiber and protein," Steve says. "It can replace corn and corn silage in a lot of dairy rations."

Steve explains that pressed pulp contains a lot of digestible fiber, which allows cows to produce more milk per pound of feed than when they

are eating a TMR that contains a large amount of non-digestible fiber (NDF). The pressed beet pulp is about 75 percent wet and 25 percent dry, so it is a good way to add moisture to a TMR, particularly when feeding dry hay.

MMPA board member and dairy farmer Eric Frahm also uses the pressed beet pulp as a way to extend his corn silage. Eric is a member of the Michigan Sugar Company cooperative, who manufactures the pressed pulp. He says he began using the product when the cooperative sent letters to its members who were dairy farmers, asking them to try the pressed beet pulp.

"The biggest reason I started using it was that it was supposed to be something that would help the sugar beet co-op out," Eric says, who farms with his wife, Teresa Crook. "Since I am a member there and the cost was quite low, I thought I would try it."

Eric has found the pressed beet pulp to make a good feed, but since he and Teresa are able to grow the majority of the feed for their 90 cow herd, he will wait to see if purchasing pressed beet pulp will be economically beneficial for their farm.

"I made 25 percent less corn last year and used the pressed beet pulp instead," Eric says. "That way I could produce more high moisture corn and didn't have to purchase as much."

In the next few months, Eric will analyze corn and pressed beet pulp prices to see if he will purchase the beet pulp this fall.

In Michigan, producers purchase their pressed beet pulp



MMPA members Leroy and Stephanie Schafer's cows like the addition of pressed beet pulp in their rations. According to Leroy, they produce more milk with higher butterfat content when the pressed beet pulp is a part of their TMR.

from Michigan Sugar Company, a cooperative of sugar beet growers. Pressed beet pulp is a byproduct of the process that makes sugar beets into sugar. The pressed pulp is typically dried and put into a pellet form, which is sold to feed companies. Michigan Sugar Company decided to try to sell the wet pressed beet pulp when energy costs for drying it began to rise. With the close proximity of dairy and beef farmers to all four of Michigan Sugar's manufacturing facilities in Bay City, Caro, Sebawaing and Croswell, the sugar company began to solicit its members who were also dairy and beef farmers to try the product.

"We saw an opportunity to get a fresh, wet product to the farmers," says Bob Braem, Director of Commodities at Michigan Sugar Company. "It started out on a small scale years ago and as farmers became more comfortable with storing it, the number of people using the pressed beet pulp and amount they use has increased."

Pressed beet pulp is made each year during the time Michigan Sugar Company processes sugar beets grown by area beet co-op members. Pressed beet pulp is available from late September through February. Most producers begin using pressed beet pulp as an economical way to extend or replace corn silage. They like it enough that they continue to use it whenever available and have found it stores well throughout the summer.

Joe and Leroy like feeding the pressed pulp so much that they purchase enough in February to store in bunker silos and ag bags. Their supplies generally last them through part of the summer. The key to reducing spoilage is to pack it and cover it up just like silage, both say. This year, Leroy also plans to try ag bagging some of the pressed beet pulp.

"We start feeding pulp as soon as the campaign starts in the fall, hauling approximately 70 tons a week from the plant in nearby Croswell," Joe says. "Sometime in February, we will stockpile approximately 1,900 tons, packing and covering it just as you would silage. That will last us until early summer."

Prior to harvest season and when dairy farmers are planning their expenses and feed rations, Bob is asked if Michigan Sugar Company will have pressed beet pulp available.

"Pressed beet pulp is an important part of Michigan Sugar Company's business as a byproduct of making sugar," Bob replies. "Michigan Sugar is committed to

providing pressed beet pulp every year to livestock producers."

With all of the feed options out there, Steve says another reason dairy producers should consider using pressed beet pulp is because it is locally produced in Michigan and supports the state's agriculture industry.

"Feeding beet pulp has allowed us to free up some acres to actually grow beets, which we have been doing for 4 years now," Joe says. "First we rented shares and then we purchased our own shares in Michigan Sugar Company."

Producers scoring 95 percent or more on Grade A Surveys and Federal Check Ratings

MMPA Morval LaLone

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Donald Kuehl Sr.*

Pine Ridge Farm

Gross Dairy Farms Inc.

Paul Miller

End Road Farm

Harold & Robert Cnossen

Keith DeRuiter

Bentham Homestead Farms Inc.

John Myles Schooley

Gaylord & Gerald Denslow

MMPA Simon

June 2006

Jason Vanneste*

Terri Hawbaker*

Anderson Farms Inc.

Howard & Mary Jo Straub Jr.

Steve & Eileen Feldpausch

Jeffry & Patricia Thelen

Fedewa Dairy LLC

Steenblik Dairy LLC

Hufnagel Farm LLC

Joseph Nurenberg

Thomas Cook

MMPA Ovid West

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Pamela Slee*

Kurncz Farms Inc.

T & K Dairy

P & H Farms

Thomas Goodman

Charles Babcock

Adkinson Farm

Ray Christensen

*Scored 100 percent