

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

MAKING THE MOST OF CONSULTANTS AND TSPs

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Consultants, whether they are nutritional consultants, Technical Service Providers (TSPs), veterinarians, or another type of consultant, are employees of the dairy operation. Producers hire consultants for the services and expertise they provide. Simply paying the consultant on a regular basis does not insure that the consultant is providing, or is able to provide, the dairy with the best service possible. Producers need to make an effort to use the consultant's expertise. Communication between the dairy producer and the consultant is essential to insure a good consultant-producer relationship.

Although most producers regularly work with a nutritionist, manure management issues have prompted many producers to hire TSPs to assist with nutrient management plans, comprehensive nutrient management plans, or permit applications. Technical Service Providers can be a tremendous resource for a dairy operation, but producers need to utilize the knowledge and expertise of their TSP. Even though the intent of hiring a TSP may originally be to meet regulatory requirements for an operation, TSPs can offer management guidance and assist in planning for the future.

The following list includes examples of basic questions for producers to consider when developing or improving a business relationship with a consultant.

- Does the consultant have the necessary education, certifications, and/or experience?
- Do you meet with your consultant on a regular basis?
- Have you discussed your operation's goals with your consultant?

Some specific questions to consider when working with a TSP are:

- Do you know the status of your permit, nutrient management plan, or comprehensive nutrient management plan?
- Is your TSP assisting with the management of your operation or are they only fulfilling regulatory requirements?
- Do you discuss on-farm implementation of your nutrient management plan or permitting requirements with your TSP?

Consultants and TSPs present a tremendous resource for a dairy operation, but producers must take advantage of the expertise they provide. Remember consultants and TSPs are paid employees, and dairy producers have the responsibility to verify the consultant is providing the operation with quality services and expertise worth the expense.