

Texas Dairy Matters

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BUNK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS TO REDUCE RUMEN ACIDOSIS

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Bunk management practices that promote feed sorting and slug feeding must be controlled to minimize the incidence of sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA). Poor feeding management can mask the performance of the most finely tuned ration.

The dairy cow has a skill for extensive sorting of total mixed rations (TMR). This sorting usually means the coarse particles aren't consumed. Research suggests that higher producing cows have increased sorting habits. The combination of high intakes of rumen digestible diets and low intakes of effective fiber places high producing cows at greater risk for SARA.

If sorting is determined to be a problem, consider:

- feeding smaller amounts of TMR more frequently,
- adding less dry hay to the ration or processing the hay prior to TMR inclusion, or
- adding water or a liquid feed supplement to the TMR to enhance mixing.



Bunk management practices that cause cows to slug feed (eat fewer and larger meals more quickly) may also promote SARA and laminitis. These practices may include: limited bunk space, limited access time to feed, heavy bunk competition, and infrequent TMR push up. A combination of these practices (limited bunk space plus infrequent TMR push up) may be worse than any single practice.

Bunk management can be a risk factor for SARA. Control practices that promote feed sorting and slug feeding to minimize SARA conditions.

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