

The EZ Feed Computerized Feed Management System

For the vast majority of dairy farms, feeding the herd is a process of educated guesswork. The dairy owner or manager has established a routine that's carried out every day. A nutritionist may have been consulted to design the herd's feed regimen, but monitoring the delivered rations on a continuous basis is rarely done well. Traditionally, tracking the feed program has been too labor intensive and error prone to prove worth the time necessary. But what if the data could be collected automatically? What if it was a part of the feed distribution process itself and not an extra step that had to be carried out? Wouldn't tighter controls translate into a more efficient and confident feed program?

That is exactly the goal of the EZ Feed computerized feed management system developed and marketed by Valley Agricultural Software of Tulare, California. The system targets feed management because to most every dairy, feed is the single largest operational cost and is therefore, the best opportunity for cost savings.



The system works by electronically integrating your feed wagon with the mixer scale head (such as the J Star Scale) and routing data and control functions right into the feed truck cab. The easy access control center is what allows the system to be used directly by the feed truck driver during distribution. The herd is defined to the system by how many head exist in each string and what the appropriate feed mix is for each string. Then, the feed mix components are weighed into each distribution load and are recorded when they're delivered to the pen. Animal head count and feed mix changes are simple updates to the EZ Feed software program.



The result is a reliable recording of feed consumption over time right down to each individual mix component. The dairy operations manager and the animal nutritionist can directly track the effects of changes to the feed program by looking at the data from any previous point in time. In addition, waste and excess cost due to overfeeding can be reduced or eliminated completely. Estimates from the dozens of EZ Feed installations already in place indicate that any given dairy may be spending as much as 20% more than necessary on feed due to error and inefficiency. The following daily loading report is just one example of the information the system provides.

Loading Report :

	<u>Ingr</u>	<u>actual</u> <u>loaded</u>	<u>expected</u> <u>to load</u>	<u>load</u> <u>dev.</u>	<u>%</u> <u>error</u>
06:34:48	HighHay	822	(820)	2	0.2%
06:36:54	Haylage	1014	(1020)	6	0.6%
06:38:21	Cornsilag	1391	(1370)	21	1.5%
06:40:37	GrainMix	1593	(1570)	23	1.5%
06:41:43	Cttnseed	274	(270)	4	1.5%
06:42:56	WetGlutten	698	(680)	18	2.6%
total loading deviation & avg. error				74lbs	1.3%

The dollar cost of feed allocations is easy to calculate as compared to the impact on milk production of a poorly implemented feed program. But it's clear to everybody that if you can't answer the question of how close to the charts your cows are eating, you are probably absorbing losses in milk production. The EZ Feed system provides reports that give your actual cost per cow, dry matter intakes, as well as the check on feeder accuracy. And, as a result of the tight day-to-day system management, EZ Feed can track your on-hand feed inventory down to the component level. A monthly inventory review gives you a direct way to monitor the system and measure your overall results. This information is exactly what you need when you're preparing to contract for your yearly feed allowances.

If there is one place in the dairy operation that data is critical, it's in the management of your herd's feed program. Not only is this the most expensive cost component of your business, it's also the key to your animals' health and therefore, milk production levels.



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