

# Brainstorming Ideas to keep cows milking with this year's wet weather impacted forages

To say that this spring's wet weather has been a challenge would be an understatement. Late harvested hay crop will be of poor quality and will impair your herd's ability to produce milk economically. Most available data shows that higher producing cows have an economic advantage. Energy intake is the most limiting factor when it comes to high milk production and late cut 1<sup>st</sup> cutting will not have it. Feeding high levels of poor quality hay crop can impair milk production for an entire year.

Below is a list of ideas to consider to keep your cows milking as you battle with Mother Nature this spring. Only some, a few, or none may be applicable to your situation. I certainly do not have a corner on ideas here. Every situation is different; consider ideas that can work for you.

- Segregate feed by quality and only feed the best to milking cows. Some systems lend themselves to this strategy, others do not. Youngstock may need some (or more) grain supplementation with poorer quality forage to grow at acceptable rates.
- Once you get 1<sup>st</sup> cut off (believe it or not, some people did get 1<sup>st</sup> cut off before & between the early rain) add Nitrogen to the grass fields to boost 2<sup>nd</sup> cut yields.
- Feed a heavier Corn Silage diet to the milk cows if inventories allow. Since energy is the most limiting factor to high production, a higher C.S. diet will help to meet energy needs. You will have to supplement with more protein.

- Some late decisions to plant more short season C.S. could boost C.S. inventories. Also, if you grow corn for grain, consider harvesting more for C.S. to allow you to feed a higher C.S. diet.
- If you are forced to feed some poorer quality forage (because of inventories) to the milk cows, consider replacing some of that forage with some highly digestible fiber sources such as soy hulls, brewers grains, or citrus pulp. Even though it would be an additional expense, an increase in milk output often results in the payback being very worthwhile economically.

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