

Webinar summary: Managing the rumen for cow performance

This webinar details the importance of managing the rumen through various stages of the cow's lifecycle to promote higher performance and better health. Effective use of dietary tools and consistent feeding practices are important for maintaining rumen stability and preventing issues like SARA.

In this webinar:

1. Importance of balancing the rumen

- Balancing the rumen through the transition period improves cow condition, energy release at calving, and overall performance.
- Critical outcomes are: better feed conversion efficiency, reduced condition loss post-calving, improved reproductive performance, and peak milk production.

2. Rumen function

- The rumen acts as a fermentation chamber with bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and archaea.
- Proper management of microbial populations and diet is needed to maintain rumen health and maximise nutrient absorption.

3. Healthy rumen cycle

- The cow's diet feeds the rumen microbes, which in turn produce essential nutrients like volatile fatty acids, amino acids, and B vitamins.
- Adequate fibre in the diet stimulates rumination, which is essential for maintaining rumen pH and stability.

4. Impact of stress

- Stress significantly affects rumen stability by reducing appetite and rumination.
- Consistent feeding and minimising stress are needed for maintaining rumen health.

5. Sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA)

- SARA is a condition where rumen pH drops below ideal levels, negatively impacting cow performance and health.
- To prevent SARA, we need to manage fibre intake and monitor rumen pH.

6. Cow behaviour and performance indicators

- Changes in cow behaviour, manure consistency, milk production, and milk fat percentage can indicate rumen instability.
- Wearable technology can help monitor cow health and rumen function.

7. Tools for rumen stability

- Effective fibre, rumen buffers like Calsea, live yeast, betaine, anionic salts, minerals, and vitamins are important tools for maintaining rumen stability.
- Proper diet management and gradual feed transitions are needed for rumen health.

8. Transition and calving management

- Proper management during transitions (e.g. dry cow to calved cow) is necessary to minimise stress and maximise cow performance.
- Calving stress management involves adequate fibre, balanced minerals, and monitoring cow condition.

9. Practical steps

- Gradual introduction of new feeds and managing feed composition during transitions help maintain rumen health.
- Monitoring cow behaviour and adjusting management practices accordingly can improve overall cow performance.

For more detailed information, you can download the slide deck and watch the webinar recording.