**NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – APRIL 2014 NEWSLETTER**

Likely corn purchases for 2014 have been purchased by now. The dilemma of growing BMR and the value of the end product silage are always an issue. In general the plus side of BMR includes: great forage digestibility, good feed for high producing cows and transition cows. It can be mixed with conventional corn silage in rations but at least 4.5 kg of dry matter (14kg as fed) needs to be fed in order to gain the BMR benefit. On the negative side: lower yield (about 10%), higher price and poor drought tolerance. A common question asked is whether conventional and BMR corn silage can be grown side by side in the field and therefore ensiled together. This does not work well 1) due to fact that heat unit estimations for the 2 silages may be similar and yet maturity dates can be significantly different. 2) Within the silo there can be big differences in digestibility and ratios of one silage to another are dependent on field conditions and yield. BMR needs to be planted on the best land and early.
(This newsletter material is taken from a meeting with Ev Thomas, Oak Point Agronomics)

Bunker silo bases of concrete can wear out quickly. Paving, with asphalt, can provide an economical way to resurface the bunker floor. Under all circumstances, with asphalt care must be taken to minimize or remove the chance of water seeping underneath. Just like on our roads – water/ice will cause cracks and potholes in any asphalt surface. A properly prepared drive over pile is an inexpensive way to store feed. Preparation includes a good base, large enough to handle a pile using a 3:1 ratio on the sides. Any steeper than this will cause shearing while packing and the pile will lose integrity at the edges. A benefit of drive over piles is the ability to use 2 or more tractors, if necessary. This enables more efficient packing as tractors can stay out of each other's way. Drive over piles as well as bunkers still need to pack layers no more than 6" thick. In order to lengthen the layer to be packed it is felt that filling in layers might be a better option than using the standard "progressive wedge" technique. With forage spread over more surface area the layers are thinner making packing more efficient. Silage density due to packing has a huge effect on the quality and quantity held by a bunker or pile. Densities of 18-20 lbs and more dry matter per square foot are possible. With higher density comes more tonnes of silage in the bunker and less losses throughout fermentation and feedout.

For example: 1) 10 lbs DM/square foot – losses average 20% (think about ensiling only 80% of a field to Imagine what these losses resemble)
2) 20 lbs DM/square foot – losses average below 10%

Better packing pays big dividends over the year. All the benefits of good packing and covering the site are lost if good bunk face management is not implemented. Bunk faces need to be kept smooth with no air admission to the forage caused by lifting up into the pile during feedout. Always scrape down to the ground and then scoop into the mix wagon.

A new product for a base of a drive over pile is a mineral called "Wollastonite". This mineral packs very well to make a very solid base. It can be found in Ontario. Much like sand yet its particles are irregularly shaped so it doesn't "roll" like beach sand. After 1 year with silage on top it's practically like concrete.

Feeding rate from either bunkers or drive over piles is recommended to be 6" per day. In hot weather and less than ideal bunk face management it is likely best fed at 12" per day in order to maintain feed quality throughout the year. Bunker size planning is important in order that silage has a chance to stay fresh.

***If you are interested in an evening Q&A session about employing foreign workers contact us. We are coordinating an evening for April.***