



DIBS

## Dairy Issue Briefs



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Plummeting prices in the dairy industry are creating critical cash-flow and long-term survivability issues on Ohio's 3,328 dairy farms. Cost-cutting decisions must be made with full awareness of both short and long-term production and economic consequences. OSU Extension's Dairy Working Group, a collaboration of OSU Extension Educators and Specialists discuss:

### Reducing costs to improve short term cash flow

#### Can I use more corn silage in my diets to reduce cash feed costs?

First calculate your current inventory of corn silage and determine whether you have enough to increase the amount in your diets without running out before your new crop is available. If you have enough in storage, increasing corn silage and reducing concentrates will reduce cash feed costs because the corn silage is already paid for. With reasonably good quality forage, diets can contain 55 to 65% forage and maintain high milk production; however, when the concentration of NDF (neutral detergent fiber) from the forages becomes greater than about 25% of dietary dry matter, intake and milk production usually decreases. The easiest nutritional substitution is more corn silage and less high fiber, low protein byproducts such as soyhulls and wheat midds. If you replace 2 lbs of soyhulls (@\$125/ton) with 1.8 lbs of corn silage dry matter (essentially no other dietary change is needed) cash feed costs will decrease about 12 cents per cow per day. If your diet includes high fiber and medium to high protein byproducts such as distillers grains and corn gluten feed, then changes in protein supplementation such as increased soybean meal will usually need to be made when more corn silage is fed.



**Bottom Line:** If you have extra corn silage, talk with your nutritionist about replacing some concentrate with corn silage. If you do not go overboard, cash costs will decrease and you should see little negative impact on milk production.

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