DRIVER PROGRAM

# FINE-TUNE FEED EFFICIENCY

## FEEDSTUFF VARIATION

Variation is a common discussion point within animal nutrition. Much of this stems from the inability to perfect feed sampling—in both method and frequency. The industry is aspiring to ideally model exactly what the variable feeds utilized in animal rations can nutritionally provide—with the prize being optimal feed efficiency and rations that provide complete health and production. While diet formulation approaches are well advanced, there is always room for improvement.

The real culprits are hidden or underrecognized moisture and nutrient changes. Many feedstuffs provide great nutrition at economic price points within a ration, but feeds are constantly fluctuating in their moisture and nutrient supply based on environment, storage type, processing or drying, etc. And, as much of the research* has found, averaging one sample per feed type every month is less than accurate in capturing meaningful moisture or nutrient variations to identify feed cost opportunities.

**Feedstuff sampling frequency is usually dependent on a few things:**

- Experience-based recommendations or protocols
- The nutritionist's or farms time and budget for sampling and analysis

Because of these obstacles, the sampling programs of today don't match the frequency at which impactful variance occurs. Diet changes need to happen at the right time, not based upon a scheduled visit, to realize maximum feed efficiency and improved nutrient delivery to high performing cows.

## GUIDING BETTER FEED EFFICIENCY

Much like constantly monitoring our heart rates can provide accurate guides to our health and physical activity, a steady, constant program to monitor feedstuffs in diets can help reveal economically impactful trends that traditional approaches have not. The Driver program from Rock River Laboratory offers this opportunity—and much more. This sampling, analysis, and decision-aiding tool pinpoints gaps in moisture, nutrient supply, and efficiency, it also identifies areas of improvement and harvested crops' nutrition value—all of which can result in substantial feed savings.

**Driver breaks the traditionally accepted frequency and method of feed sampling and analysis with a statistically powerful approach.** Initiating weekly sampling by trained farm employees as well as fresh forage sampling, Driver encompasses forages, grains, Total Mixed Rations (TMRs), commodities, grain and pre-mixes, and fecal samples.

**Driver puts all of this at the fingertips of farm owners, managers, and their nutritionists to make decisions for successful outcomes:**

**Visualizer dashboard:** Data can be overwhelming. This feed data dashboard, exclusively available from Rock River Laboratory, is an easy guide for organizing the most important decision-making pieces.

**Rolling feed averages:** Empowers nutritionists with sample average XML files for balancing rations.

**Automated notifications and alerts:** Text push notifications share important updates and trends, along with analysis highlights in graphical format.

**Technical nutrition support:** Rock River Laboratory's expert team is ready to guide subscribers through program needs and address any difficulties.

## NOT JUST DATA

As with most of agriculture, not everything can be automated. Rock River Laboratory offers additional Driver program support through:

- Web-based portal with automated sample label printing
- Database management
- Employee sampling training tools
- Organized sampling schedules and supplies
- Farm customization
- All of this helps ensure 'more work' isn't a symptom of capturing data with new tools.

## ON-FARM ROI GENERATOR

Driver opens doors to new capabilities by painting a picture of feedstuffs' fluctuating nutritive activity. Program subscribers have utilized its information and features to realize a Return on Investment (ROI) through:

- Reduce errors between prescribed diet and fed diet that occur from dry matter differences, feeder inaccuracy, and nutrition mistakes
- Appropriately allocate forages with improved harvest quality assessment
- Improve formulations with greater confidence in the data available
- Make more timely adjustments
- Improve feed conversion
- Advance TMR and premix quality control—with tools to check the feeding team
- Improve grain and silage starch use with fecal starch measures

**DRIVER PROGRAM**

Based on feedstuff types of interest and herd size, customized solutions are available with the Driver program.

**Contact Rock River Laboratory to learn more and set up a demonstration appointment.**

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AGRICULTURAL ANALYSIS

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*St-Pierre, N.R. and W.P. Weiss. 2015. Partitioning variation in nutrient composition data of common feeds and mixed diets on commercial dairy farms. J Dairy Sci. 98:5004-5015.