PRIORITY REPORT
For Healthy Cows®
Volume 36

We went a different way...

KJRT Dairy in eastern Wisconsin has been through the highs and lows of the dairy industry. As a family farm that grew from a stanchion barn to a 300-head freestall operation, they have encountered growing pains along the way.

Where: KJRT Dairy
Size: 300 cows
P-One™ Time: 18 years

Results: Reduced feed costs by $8,000 per month. Priority's high density ration costs $5.30/cow/day

Production: 92 lb. tank average. Increased the herd rolling herd average 7,500 pounds since 2014.

Unfortunately, they experienced issues that are all too common as high feed costs and inefficiencies ate away at their margins. The consultants and experts they turned to for advice and guidance were quick to blame.

"Not many people were willing to help when we were struggling. They told me it was bad management, a consultant told me it was bad management," recalls Eric Breunig, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin – River Falls with a degree in Dairy Science and minor in Ag Business.

As Eric's parents, Kenny and Theresa Breunig, were working to build an operation that allowed him to come into the business, they shared their issues with family member Richard Breunig, founder of Priority IAC.

At KJRT, they were having a tough time making their expansion work at 55 pounds of milk. Richard brought forward some ration changes more fitting to their level of milk production. Their first change to the ration had a savings of $8,000.00 per month, with no milk loss. Initially the goal of the P-One Program™ with the Priority ration at KJRT was about reducing ration costs, while maintaining milk and focusing on herd health.

"It takes time to turn a dairy, but we saw a lot of improvement in just 15 months. We made the switch from 2x to 3x, and that helped, but it wasn't the answer," shared Eric. "A lot of it was fixing the stray voltage and a better approach to feeding with the P-One Program™ - We are feeding the cows not only cheaper, but better."

What does Better Mean?

Before starting the Priority ration, the KJRT rolling herd average was 19,737 pounds. This was significantly down from the 22,300 pound average before the herd moved into the new freestall barn - A drop they later attributed to stray voltage. The biggest problem in the milk drop was the loss of milk income, while the ration expenses climbed.

"We had the same nutritionist for 20 years. Six months into the new barn, we went down almost 15 pounds of milk. He couldn't figure it out and so we switched to a different nutritionist…the ration was a little bit cheaper, but still the same amount of milk – It wasn't feasible," recalls Eric. "Richard stated there is no more milk to get till we have other issues looked after, it's about surviving. When we switched over to the Priority ration, it made our ration a lot cheaper because it fit our milk production – It was a lot easier to cash flow."

As they got the herd back on track and tackled the stray voltage, KJRT worked with Priority towards a ration that could sustain a higher level of production. This summer, the rolling herd average reached 27,250 pounds of milk, with the tank average at 92 pounds. This comes as Kenny and Eric have made some changes - Maximizing their homegrown forages, making the most out of what they can grow.

"We used to grow a lot of alfalfa, but the cost per ton when you factor in custom chopping at four cuttings a year comes out to be a lot. We can buy hay a lot cheaper than we can grow it ourselves," says Eric. "We've shifted towards growing forage corn and oats, double cropping a lot with oats, to get away from having to feed all the alfalfa as we once did. It would have been tough to milk as many cows as we do, with the land base growing alfalfa. It takes a lot of land with limited yields compared to the grasses we can grow now."

Soluble fiber, a carbohydrate and component of good quality forages, ferments much like grain; thus creating acidosis if rumen pH isn't maintained. However, the P-One Program™ provides *Smart bacteria* to stabilize and maintain pH by optimizing energy

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KJRT owners Kenny, Eric, Erica, baby Eli, and Theresa Breunig.

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transport through efficient carbohydrate metabolism. When rumen pH is maintained, fermentable carbohydrates can be maximized from highly digestible forages. Fermentable carbohydrates such as soluble fiber, sugars, starch, and silage acids increase the total carbohydrate load and the rate at which it ferments.

"I like to feed gluten feed and corn silage, highly digestible feeds that are wet. Alfalfa is tough, you have to make sure it's in the 60-65% moisture, otherwise there is a risk of going butyric on you and you cannot feed that without a lot of problems," shares Eric.

Additionally, the microbiome in each cow is very different, yet all are fed the same TMR and expected to perform the same. By shifting the bacterial profile of the rumen to a consistent one from cow to cow, and equipping the rumen fermentation with *Smart bacteria*, the P-One Program™ is positioned as the first ingredient.

"In order to maximize the rumen, you have to feed the rumen bugs," states Eric. "With the proper feed in there, things go a lot better. We're confident in the P-One Program™ so we can feed a lot denser diet – They're eating less and are more efficient so they can produce more milk on less inputs."

Because the Priority ration focuses on a nutrient dense ration, a dry matter intake average of 55 pounds allows the herd to reach their milk production at more than a 90 pound tank average.

"Our feed efficiency is much better on the P-One Program™ than the other nutrition approaches we tried," notes Eric.

The KJRT ration consists of corn silage, gluten feeds, baleage, a few pounds per head of a grain mix.

Before the P-One Program™ and Priority ration, the ration crude protein (CP) levels were at 15.8% and the protein grain mix was 14 pounds per cow per day with 23% of that being soybeans (3.22 pounds). Currently, the P-One Program™ ration is down to 14.8% CP.

"Nutritionists are so afraid of acidosis so they try to get the cow to make milk by feeding her protein. Whereas with the P-One™ diet, I'm not concerned about acidosis, I know we don't have it," says Eric.

Maximizing ration carbohydrate density allows the Priority ration to cost KJRT $5.30/cow/day.

"It works pretty well. The ration is pretty cheap and we're getting a lot of milk," shares Eric. "Whenever I have questions they've available to answer them and more importantly to teach me. They're not just trying to sell me stuff."

"Once you get a good working team around you and are consistent, milk tends to follow," reflects Eric.

Stray Voltage

When his initial concerns about stray voltage on the farm were poopooed by consultants, Eric dug deeper. While he knew they were in a newly built freestall that was designed to prevent the problem of stray voltage, what he was seeing kept making him ask, 'What if?' What if, what they were seeing in the cows' behavior and performance pointed to a stray voltage issue?

"We had the power company out to test for stray voltage, but they weren't much help," recalls Eric. 'We ended up bringing out two independent experts and three different electricians…I ended up calling a bunch of farmers, who had been through stray voltage problems, to see what works."

As a problem solver, he used their accounts and feedback to find an innovative method to redirect current away from the buildings and cattle using the lay lines of the Earth. With this, the problems Eric had associated with the stray voltage on the farm went away. However, the solution needs to be regularly monitored and adjustments made.

"It's not gone, but it's manageable," states Eric.

Avoiding a Wreck

As an astute manager, Eric is quick to notice changes in the herd and takes action. The empowerment from tackling the stray voltage issue on the farm has led him to notice slight nuances to help better the herd. Awareness in making dry matter adjustments from rain events to variations in forage moisture within the bags, allows him to make adjustments to the load sheet ensuring the herd's ration is consistent.

While dry matter adjustments have become easy to keep a pulse on, there are other variations that can cause issues if not caught and fixed quickly. Over a year ago, KJRT experienced an issue when a grain mix was delivered with an inconsistency, as ingredients contained were not as ordered.

"Last September we got a new grain mix. I feed two loads of cow TMR mix a day, but only fed the new grain mix in the second load of the day. By the next morning, the cows had extremely liquid manure," says Eric. "We lost 10 pounds of milk per cow, basically overnight."

Eric immediately got a new grain mix in for that day's feeding. Seeing the digestive disruption that one feeding caused; he significantly increased the amount of P-One™, *Smart bacteria* fed to bring rumen fermentation back quickly and not cause lasting damage.

"I tripled the rate of P-One™ for a week and quickly got the milk and herd back on track. The milk came back within five days and the manure returned back to normal, fairly rapidly," shares Eric.

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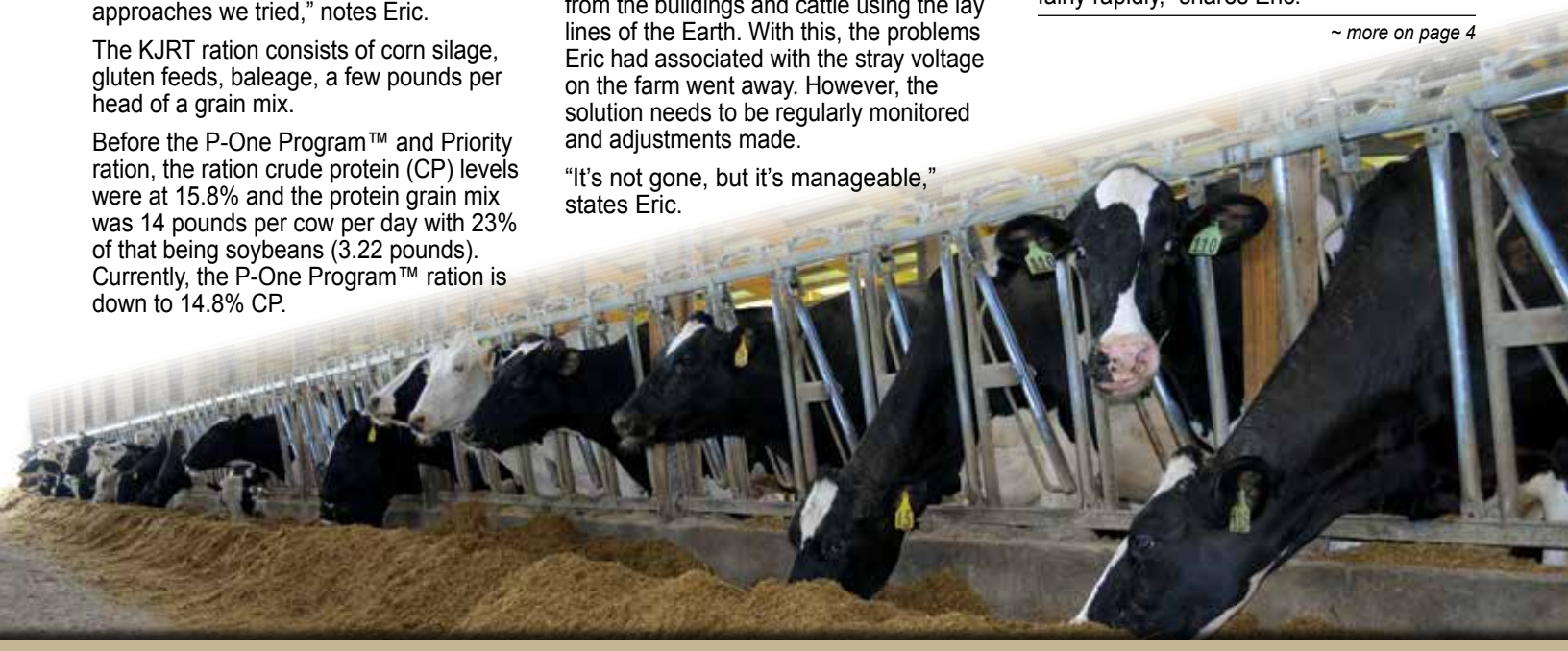

By Richard V. Breunig,
President and Founder

President's *Perspective*

The Good, The Bad, and the…Magic

We label things as good and bad because of how we associate the experience. The wreck I experienced in my time at Clover Mist Farms, where a feed mixing error decimated the herd, should by most perspectives be labeled as a bad experience. While it was a time that was full of negative emotion with animals dying, being abandoned by trusted consultants, and mislead by others – I was left in a lonely position with the struggle for the remaining herd's survival. This was one of my greatest challenges, but has turned to be the greatest part of life's learning - A premier breeding establishment at the time, forced to save the dairy, study nutrition and microbiology. This background has proved to be Priority IAC's greatest asset.

Awareness can come through events that one classifies as negative.

At Priority we take this knowledge of beneficial vs. negative impacts to evaluate how certain microorganisms function within the body. This is not easy; as there are numerous species of bacteria, with scientific estimates at more than a trillion. There are millions of strains (or subspecies/subtypes) of each of the different species that form the estimated population on the Earth at five million trillion, trillion bacteria, or scientifically stated as 5×10^{30} bacteria. Take for example *Pediococcus pentosaceus*, within this specific genus/species (like a family), there are an infinite number of strains. Just as there are notable differences between individual cows, the same is true with bacterial strains. Among the many strains within each family of living bacteria, there are significant differences between each individual strain. Some strains have little impact or can negatively affect the host, while others are beneficial, even smart. This has been Priority's objective. We understand that all bacteria are not the same, that the strain truly matters.

Bacteria do require an abundance of carbohydrates (food) to stay alive and multiply. Everything that eats makes something. That something or byproduct may have no effect, be quite harmful to the body, or very beneficial. Their harmfulness or usefulness can be upgraded (improved) by the home (environment) they are placed in (for example the pH of the rumen or gut) or the types of and amounts of food they are given. Thus, where one of these strains from the family may be useless, others are very powerful - Even quite magical. This is what's called the new age of nutrition and animal health. The rumen is all about the microbiome community it holds and how that community of bacteria is fed. Something to ponder, each animal has its own unique microbiome and yet we force all to eat the same TMR diet expecting a similar response from animal to animal even though the natural variation in their microbiomes is astounding.

Priority had found the power is in the strains, with the simple understanding that the good guys make good things, the bad guys make bad things. Going farther, a tyrant microorganism can wreak havoc by producing lethal or toxic compounds/chemicals which can disrupt the body and cause great harm to the body. Finding the power in the good guy and providing the right food sources creates the magic in today's nutrition, and the novel concept that is Priority's pairing of microbiology and nutrition for animal health.

On the nutrition side, Priority IAC has revealed *Smart bacteria* that are quite good at specific roles in the body that benefit digestion, thus the nutrition can be streamlined. Fed daily, the P-One Program™ has the *Smart bacteria* to shift the microbiome's bacteria profile, making it more unified cow to cow so they benefit similarly from the same TMR. This is the digestive magic of life one can't see.

To date, Priority IAC Inc. is the only company bringing the fields of microbiology and nutrition together for animal health as well as providing a more cost effective and easier approach to nutrition. Priority IAC is a farm-developed concept and a family-owned company, bringing this technology directly to producers. Having learned a lot from working with cows as a producer, I understand producers hold great knowledge and animal intuition, they are able to connect the dots. Our novel approach to nutrition, nutrition principles, and company values makes Priority unique. Our producer meetings across the country are to give the power back to the producer in need of options.

The evolution of microorganisms is astonishing. A single human generation of thirty years, that one generation equals more than 750,000 microbial generations. The approach of using a unique strain or strains of bacteria that can do the work, this approach is much more balanced than simply providing a chemical compound to kill off all bacteria. More so, antibiotics can kill more than just bacteria as certain types of these drugs have been found to negatively impact the mitochondria (the powerhouse of the cell) in mammal's cells.

What Priority IAC discovered with research into microbiology, through the use of advancing techniques in DNA sequencing, is strong unique bacterial strains to perform a specific task in digestion. These genotype tested and genetic fingerprinted strains go through a quality check unique to the microbiology world called Bacteria Quality System (BQS) to verify strain, purity, counts, and formulations.

This is why *Smart bacteria* is only available in Priority IAC products.

– truly remarkable products!

PRIORITY IAC™
the *Smart bacteria* & Nutrition Company™

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Heifer Feeding

A one group heifer feeding approach that Priority IAC promotes and formulates is also yielding an impact for the KJRT herd.

Priority's approach is a one-group heifer ration to push along development and calve earlier than in the past. The heifers can reach their mature weight quicker and be bred earlier to calve by 22-24 months of age. Moreover, when they calve they don't need to expend energy on growth; they are already grown and ready to perform in the herd. Priority is focused on maximizing development once the rumens are fully developed.

"The heifers go to a heifer grower at 3 months of age. With the success we had seen on the farm with P-One™, we had the heifer grower start feeding a P-One™ ration to the heifers for a year now," shares Eric. "Now the heifers are starting to come back to the farm with the right condition – Instead of having to feed them to grow, we can feed them to milk. We are starting to see them give a lot more milk in that first lactation, compared to what we were at."

A year into feeding Priority's one-group heifer ration KJRT has seen their first lactation peak average increase by 5 pounds. The 2-year-olds calve in better, come into milk stronger, reach higher peaks, and hold their production longer. Eric has seen a 2,500 pound 305 day ME increase in the first lactation group.

Reproduction

The 50% pregnancy rate at the last veterinarian check was a bit down from previous herd checks. The vet points out that it's good, well above industry average, in fact.

"I want to be in the 50-70% pregnant range. I aim for getting 10-12% of the herd pregnant every month, so to have cows consistently calving to reach and maintain high levels of production. If you get long days in milk, you get more ups and downs in production," notes Eric.

The KJRT pregnancy rate is achieved with a low percentage of shots or Ovsynch. Days in milk are at 168 days and dry days at 45-60 days, with older cows getting the shorter end of that range and heifers getting the full 60 days after their first lactation.

"Our breeding improved with Priority's trace mineral pack (TracePac Gold™ Smart Release Crystals™), pretty fast," shared Eric.

A big piece of advice Eric has to offer, "Your forages have to be free of mold and made right, otherwise your breeding will suffer dramatically!"

Fresh Cows Go

In addition to successful herd reproduction, KJRT also strive for a smooth transition at calving. By keeping days in milk down, they ensure cows are not overly fat in the dry period. The dry cow ration keeps a good pulse on the DCAD and trace mineral levels.

"When we started with the P-One Program™ (P-One™, DCP™, and TracePac Gold™ Smart Release Crystals™) the fresh cows started calving in a lot better. We didn't have as many RPs," recalls Eric. While KJRT had fed P-One™ for many years, they started the P-One Program™ with Priority ration in 2014.

Additionally, Eric gives every fresh cow two Gold Spike™ Capsules and a full 300 gram tube of StartUp™ Gel to give their digestive track a boost, along with a calcium bolus and nasal vaccine. The Gold Spike™ Capsules work with the body to support immune health during the hormone shifts at calving and stress that can bring health challenges during this transition period. The StartUp™ Gel delivers a concentrated drench to stimulate the rumen for feed and water consumption without the mess of pumping or drenching.

"The tube of StartUp™ Gel I think helps the cow get through the transition period, and shortens her transition time," states Eric. "I've given StartUp™ Gel to cows that seem off, I just give them a tube and wait to see what happens. More times than not, that's the only thing they need. They're back at eating."

On the second day post fresh, cows will get 100 grams of the StartUp™ Gel.

"If they look like they need a kick start, I give them more StartUp™ Gel or Gold Spike™ Capsules as needed. In the case of a uterus infection or a hard calving, I keep giving them two Gold Spike™ Capsules a day until they take off."