



Milk Protein Targets

Fat cows have low milk protein levels because their dry matter intake is low.
Thin cows have low milk protein levels because they have low body fat reserves.
Stressed herds and high Somatic Cell Count herds have low milk protein levels.
Carry over cows increase the average milk protein content in Spring calving herds.

What are the Milk Protein Targets?

- When the energy gap is not filled and cows are hungry, milk protein drops.
- Milk protein percentage should not drop below 3.0 in early lactation.
- Milk protein percentage should increase by 0.05% per month to the end of lactation.
- The Milk Butterfat to Milk Protein Ratio should be at approximately 1.15 to 1
- For example if Butterfat is 3.80% and Protein is 3.30%, the ratio is 1.15 to 1.
- High butterfat percentages, greater of 4.35% in very early lactation indicates that cows are using too much body reserves.
- Jersey and Jersey cross cows will have high butterfat levels arising from their genetics.
- If Holstein or traditional black and white cows have very high butterfats in early lactation, they are using too much body fat.
- Cows are burning off their own body fat to support their energy requirement.
- Some of this body fat conversion is seen as higher milk butterfat percentage.
- Using too much body reserves leads to a significant loss in cow body condition and to thin cows.
- Thin cows have lower milk protein levels and lower conception rates during the breeding season.
- Low butterfat and low protein indicate that the herd is not working efficiently
- Milk Lactose levels should be greater than 4.65% in early lactation.
- Milk yield drop should not exceed 2.5% per week once cows have peaked.
- Do not let cows get thin, if ribs are very visible then cows are too thin.
- Ensure high Dry Matter Intakes and Total Energy Intakes to optimise milk protein.

Feeding cows well is good management practise.