



High Forage Diets are Rewarding for Midwest Nutrition's Clients by Larry  
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“Once again we will be offering some excellent quality cattle out of overstocked herds in Central Wisconsin. The philosophy at Midwest Nutrition and Feed is to feed large quantities of high quality forages balanced with minerals and limited added grain and protein. This approach has served them well in promoting excellent health, leading to longevity and profitable milk production! We will have many top 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> calf hand-picked cows milking 85 to 120 lbs. with low SCC (most under 70,000) and excellent type.”

This quote is part of the sale bill for the Midwest Nutrition and Feed Elite Dairy Cattle Sale held in the spring every year since 2006. This year's sale will be in April, 2013 (exact date not yet set) at the Premier Livestock facility in Thorp, WI. It will feature about 130 head, all from Midwest Nutrition clients. Midwest has been promoting and balancing high-forage diets even before it was cool (remember \$2.50/bu. corn)! This sale has become a representation of the often overlooked parameters of longevity and herd health in the profitability of a dairy farm. It has become so easy to sum up success on a dairy by DHIA Rolling herd averages or simply “pounds per cow.”

Overall herd health, longer-lived cows and extra milk cows to sell (or to expand from within) make a huge difference on a modern dairy farm's profitability. This is whether the cows are registered and sold for breeding stock or are just cows producing milk and going to another herd whose owner hasn't yet learned the value of a high forage diet. These days, a dairy needs every advantage it can muster.

The fact is that huge losses occur for each metabolic illness or episode of acidosis-induced lameness without even considering the cascade effect of one illness leading to another. These costs are devastating to the economy of a dairy. Hats off to the Midwest Nutrition team (Richard Stommes, John Feiten and Joe Fischer) for recognizing and combating these realities. Higher forage diets are the key, but there is no free lunch. High forage diets are possible only when the forages contain a balance of highly digestible fiber for energy and effective fiber to promote rumination. Some of the best sources of these fibers come from a combination of warm and cool season grasses harvested in a vegetative state along with the harvesting technique termed “hay in a day” or “wide-swathing.” These are lessons being taught to and learned by new and old Midwest Nutrition customers with evident results. Otherwise, there would be no Midwest Nutrition and Feed Elite Dairy Cattle sale.

