

## Nutritionists share blunt truths/experiences about the P-One Program™

by Scott Burditt



Veteran nutritionists  
from left to right:  
Mike Biese, Linda Davis,  
and Tom Nauman.

For 10 years, nutritionist Mike Biese recommended against using P-One in rations. So why did one farm visit to a herd on a high-carbohydrate diet change his mind?

Veteran nutritionists Mike Biese, Linda Davis and Tom Nauman at a recent group gathering sat down with Priority International Animal Concepts, Founder and CEO, Richard Breunig for a discussion on why they put their herds on the P-One Program™ despite it going against conventional wisdom.

“Changing the way you feed your cows isn’t something you take lightly,” says Breunig. “We are proud to be helping nutritionists help dairy producers accomplish what they previously couldn’t have.”

**Richard:** I first want to ask why you began recommending that P-One be the first ingredient in the diet. I know you weren’t all big believers right away.

**Mike:** I spent 10 years recommending against it. Then, a year and a half ago, I came across a farm that was feeding a lot of carbs, and the owner was feeding P-One. I was really surprised and it was a bitter pill to swallow. I’m happy to say, though, that right now I have 5,000 cows on P-One and am betting my career that this is right. I’m not even interested on taking on any new farms unless they want to go this way.

**Linda:** Like Mike, I encountered a great-looking herd on the P-One Program™. The producer had been using it for awhile. His cows intrigued me

because their body condition was so good and cows don’t lie and that prompted me to start putting my herds on it.

**Tom:** My initial motives for implementing the P-One Program™ were purely selfish. Our local Priority representative moved and we saw a business void that needed to be filled. We feed a lot of carbs and low protein, and P-One is the ingredient that makes it all work together. Our business has been steadily growing, even in a tough economy, and it all goes back to saving feed costs for the producer and changing the diet to make a big difference to his bottom line.

**Richard:** What levels of non fiber carbohydrates (NFC) have you seen with herds on the P-One Program™, and have you experienced any risk

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## The Midwest faced with challenging feed issues in ‘09

by Ken Schneider, Microbiologist

Producers in the majority of the Midwest and most of the corn-belt were presented with a challenging harvest in 2009. If low milk prices weren’t enough, cool temperatures and wet conditions during the late part of the growing season created harvest and storage challenges for the year’s corn crop. Cool, moist conditions resulted in mold and mycotoxin formation in the

field creating health and production problems for many producers across the country.

Mycotoxins may be present even where mold is not obvious. However, if you see mold, you likely have mycotoxins. Once produced, most of these toxic compounds aren’t destroyed by heat, time or fermentation. Drying, roasting or steam-flaking the corn will not get rid of any mycotoxins

that may have already been produced but will go a long way in reducing further development of molds already present and producing toxins. So be aware that this year’s corn crop may affect producers nationwide.

Unfortunately there is no silver bullet other than discarding the moldy product. Of course that’s not a viable option. Diluting the moldy feed is

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## Nutritionists share blunt truths. . . *cont'd from page 1*

*with acidosis as you increase NFCs? Secondly, there's a lot of talk about acid detergent fiber (ADF) levels. Where should those levels be and are you concerned with the levels you're seeing?*

**Tom:** We typically will top out NFCs at 45. I'd say most of our diets are about 42 to 44, and we don't see any problems. For ADF levels, I don't like to see them over 18 percent. But, if I've got 29 percent neutral detergent fiber (NDF) in the diet, I'm okay with seeing 16 or 16½ percent ADF. A lot of people would say that's way too low, but if you've got a lot of NDF, especially with good digestibility, you'll be fine.

I'd also like to point out that we're looking for milk urea nitrogen (MUN) levels in the single digits. We tell our guys that if they're over 10, we want to know about it, and if it continues to stay over 10, then we know we have to change the diet. I see no good reason to be above 10 and lots of good reasons to be below 10.

The University of Pennsylvania Veterinary School has done a lot of research on MUNs. I'd consider them pioneers in looking at MUN numbers. You know how people used to say that MUN's above 19 were going to hurt reproduction? Then they started to say MUNs above 16 might hurt reproduction, and if you're in the 10 to 14 range you're not going to hurt reproduction? Well, researchers at the university found that if we can get MUNs below 10, even if reproduction has been good, reproduction will be even better. That's why I like to see single-digit MUNs.

**Linda:** The NFC levels I see typically will run somewhere between 43 and 48, and even as high as 48. We don't have any acidosis concerns with those numbers. As far as ADF levels go, when I was a producer, I never would have gone below 22 percent ADF in the summertime. Today, I don't really focus on ADF. I'm telling my producers I don't need them above 18 but that the level can go really low. I don't have a problem with that. Plus, I've run about a 46 starch and that's maybe the highest I've ever run, so we get pretty high levels of carbs and we're fine.

**Mike:** I have all my farms on three pounds of cottonseed, so my ADFs tend to be 19 and NFCs are at 44. No problems. I'm amazed at how much milk you can get out of cows with MUNs really low, like 5 or 6. That's when they're really milking.

**Richard:** *Tell me about particle size. What's been your experience with P-One?*

**Mike:** I'm not worried about it anymore. I actually haven't used my Penn State shaker box in months. In fact, now, I'm kind of going the other way. If particles are too sortable, I don't like that either. I used to always want them long, long, long. Now, I'd rather have homogenized soy meal.

**Linda:** As far as I'm concerned, the smaller the better, where you can pack it better. I don't really worry about it.

**Tom:** I agree with what's been said. In Pennsylvania, we have a lot of connections with the folks from Penn State who developed the particle separator. If you talk to them, they will tell you the research says if you're three to five percent on the top box, you get good rumen function, as long as the diet is where it's supposed to be chemically.

**Richard:** *I want to point out that what we're talking about involves significant change to the ration. How quickly can you safely make these changes?*

**Tom:** We will vary the amount of time to make the ration changes depending on the comfort level of the producer. This could be anywhere from two weeks to three months. Our experience is that the cows can transition very quickly on the P-One Program™.

**Linda:** You can do it overnight, but if they're currently on a high-fat ration you may need to leave some fat in there for a while and then gradually reduce it because it's hard for them to get fully into the fermentation if they've had high fat. Even so, you can go ahead and get them seeded right away with your DCP product before starting the P-One Program™.

**Mike:** I just switch them just like that. They don't miss a beat. I put them on DCP, and on day 13, I start the P-One Program™.

### About the nutritionists

Mike Biese owns Intensive Dairy Care in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He has been an independent nutritionist for 12 years.

Linda Davis was a dairy producer for 18 years before selling the farm and joining Southern States, where she began her career as a nutritionist.

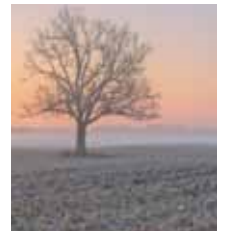
Tom Nauman is a nutritionist with Hooper Feeds in Pennsylvania. He began recommending P-One in 2003. ■

## Feed issues. . . *cont'd from page 1*

an option but only if levels aren't too high. It's important to test for mold and mycotoxins to determine the level of contamination.

If you have clean corn, keep the moldy stuff separate so you don't contaminate the good corn. Storage in smaller bags and bunkers will make it easier to pack tight to eliminate oxygen and allow fast feed out. Feed the worst corn up during cold winter months when molds and yeast are growing the slowest. You need to feed through the moldy corn fast enough to prevent new mold and yeast growth. A minimum of 6 inches daily feed out is necessary.

Incorporate a feed additive with toxin-binding properties in your ration to reduce the effects of mycotoxins. There are several available on the market.



There is a good chance that you will lose some milk even if you dry or treat your corn because the mold is already there. However you will lose more milk if you do nothing and let the mold continue to grow. For more detailed information, the publication "Molds and Mycotoxin Problems in Livestock Feeding" from Penn State University can be found on the Penn State University website: <http://www.das.psu.edu/research-extension/dairy/nutrition/pdf/mold.pdf>

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## pH Control, a promise he didn't believe

Pictured from the left is Les Bly and Travis Bly from the Bly Dairy Farm, Inc. located in Waubun, Minnesota.

Les Bly had been witnessing a steady decline in average rumen pH level when he turned to the last resource he could ever imagine himself considering. It was a print advertisement in December of 2008. His herd's rumen pH averaging a low 5.0 and no remedy in sight, Bly responded to an ad for the P-One Program™.

"Generally, we don't believe the things we see advertised. We rely on what universities say and follow what they recommend. But, we figured we had nothing to lose," says Bly.

The P-One Program™ helps cows maintain a balanced rumen pH and reduces incidence of acidosis. Not long after implementing the program, Bly realized he had everything to gain. His average rumen pH increased to 6.2. Several other health factors subsequently showed dramatic improvement.

Bly and his wife Cindy, along with son Travis and daughter-in-law Stacy, own Bly Dairy Farm, Inc., in Waubun, Minn. They milk 170 Holstein-Scandinavian Red crossbreds. Their path to improving rumen pH began when their cows showed symptoms of subacute ruminal acidosis: consistently sore feet, fluctuating milk production, variable feed intake and variability in manure consistency, a factor identified by Priority Int'l Animal Concepts as Variable Manure Syndrome, or VMS.

At first, Bly says, given his ration makeup at the time it seemed unlikely that he was witnessing an acidosis problem. "We were feeding a simple, balanced ration with starch levels that ran 28 to 30%. But it did seem that as we improved the quality of our forages, rumen health issues increased," he says.

To verify what was going on, he had his vet do routine rumen taps. "We saw our rumen

pH levels running around a 5.6 average," says Bly. He began feeding sodium bicarbonate, yet problems persisted. In the summer of 2008, by this time feeding up to a pound of buffers and seeing no improvement in rumen pH, he cut the expenses from his rations.

By fall of 2008, Bly says herd foot problems were becoming epidemic. His vet provided the setup for him to perform the rumen taps himself because he wanted to do them weekly, hoping he would somehow be able to stay on top of the growing problems. He admits, "I really didn't know how we were going to get on top of it."

Without buffers in the ration, Bly saw rumen pH drop to an average of around 5.0. In December, he saw the P-One Program™ advertisement.

"I normally don't pay attention to ads or even testimonials because I don't find them reliable. I decided to order a small amount of product, thinking I didn't have anything to lose," says Bly. He put his herd on the P-One Program™ in the first part of January 2009. Within two weeks, he says, he saw rumen pH at around 6.2 to 6.4. Now, nine months into the program, rumen pH has been averaging 6.2.

"We've seen a steady climb in production, probably above 5 pounds total so far. We've also seen a dramatic improvement in foot health and in breeding," says Bly. Feed intake and manure are now consistent.

Following the program recommendations, Bly fed P-One along with Priority DCP to seed the gut. After 15 days, he discontinued the feeding of Priority DCP, as the program allows. Once on the P-One Program™, Bly was able to drop crude protein from approximately 16.5 to 15.7. He never did re-introduce the eliminated buffers.

Looking back, Bly says "It was wishful thinking on his part to believe he'd see herd health improvements." Actually, he didn't expect to see any improvement at all. "I was very skeptical," he says. "Priority said that once rumen pH

improved, we'd see improvements in total cow health and then production, and we did."

"We used to have variable manure syndrome," Bly says. He says manure was loose to very loose. Since starting the program, he's seen a dramatic improvement in both firmness and consistency throughout the herd.

Others working on his operation have witnessed the dramatic improvements. Six weeks or so after starting the P-One Program™, Bly's hoof trimmer showed up. "What did you do to the cows?" the trimmer asked. Bly says the trimmer immediately noticed the glaring hoof problems were gone. He estimates that hoof problems dropped by about 60 percent and believes the only cows having foot trouble today are the chronic cases he plans to cull.

Even his nutritionist is a convert. "He wasn't familiar with the P-One Program™ and he was quite surprised that it worked, but he has since endorsed it," says Bly.

As for reproduction, he says that on the first herd check after starting the program, when he palpated cows for pregnancy, he saw dramatic improvement. About 90 percent of cows that presented for pregnancy were pregnant whereas in the past, he says about 50 percent would have been pregnant.

According to Bly, the key factor in the health is rumen pH. "I think every dairyman knows that when you overcome acidosis and reach the proper pH you're going to see a lot of other improvements," he says.

"I recommend to other producers to do a rumen tap before starting the program and then do it again later. Then you'll know where you stand."

As for the print advertisement that called his attention to the P-One Program™, Bly says, "It was the first product we've ever bought for the herd that performed as advertised." ■

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## Study risk of subacute ruminal acidosis on the P-One Program™

### Results on pH Field Study

- Analysis of variance was performed to compare fluctuations in ruminal pH across time (Table 1).
  - ◆ ELAC mean pH ranged from 6.67 to 6.76 at 4 and 7 hours respectively and was not significantly different ( $P = 0.4582$ ).
  - ◆ PLAC mean pH ranged from 6.67 to 6.79 and was not significantly different ( $P = 0.2714$ ).
  - ◆ Mean pH across all groups for all herds at times 4, 7, and 10 hours was 6.7 (SD = 0.3) and not found to be significantly different ( $P = 0.9371$ ).
- A subset of 12 cows in each population were sampled over time to determine the pen and herd risk for SARA with a threshold  $pH \leq 5.5$  indicative of SARA.
- As indicated in Table 2, a  $pH \leq 5.5$  was not detected at any time point in either the ELAC or PLAC groups on the four herds tested.

### Summary

The primary objective of this cross-sectional study was to estimate the risk of SARA in early lactation and peak lactation cows in commercial dairy herds on the P-One Program™. Because part of the P-One Program™ contains a ration higher in energy than consistent with the industry standard, it is feared that cows are at higher risk for SARA and acute acidosis.

Despite these fears, the four herds on the P-One Program™ in this study showed no clinical signs of ruminal acidosis and, based upon the sample populations, were not at risk for SARA.

Additionally, cows on the P-One Program™ in ELAC and PLAC demonstrated static pH levels throughout the sample period consistent with optimal rumen function and eating behaviors. ■

*Abstract presented at 2009 ADSA in Montreal. For full report, go to our website at: [www.forhealthycows.com](http://www.forhealthycows.com)*

**Table 1.** Average DIM for ELAC and PLAC groups by farm.

Herd	Herd Size (Lactating Cows)	Group	N (Head)	Average DIM (SD)
1	2,700	ELAC	12	28.9 (0.9)
		PLAC	12	81.4 (13.1)
2	1,000	ELAC	12	23.6 (7.8)
		PLAC	12	106.3 (36.4)
3	4,800	ELAC	12	28.6 (0.5)
		PLAC	12	102.7 (15.3)
4	1,100	ELAC	12	26.6 (4.2)
		PLAC	12	79.0 (10.3)
Total	9,600	ELAC	48	27.3 (3.5)
		PLAC	48	91.8 (12.8)

**Table 2.** Number of cattle by farm at each sample time that experienced a  $pH < 5.5$ .

Herd	Group	N (Head)	4 Hours	7 Hours	10 Hours
1	ELAC	12	0	0	0
	PLAC	12	0	0	0
2	ELAC	12	0	0	0
	PLAC	12	0	0	0
3	ELAC	12	0	0	0
	PLAC	12	0	0	0
4	ELAC	12	0	0	0
	PLAC	12	0	0	0

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