Feed Shortage 2018/19

Filling the pantry

If you haven’t bought different feed ingredients before, it can be a daunting task. Where do you find them? How do you work out a good deal when you see one? What do you do with them once the truck arrives?

You will be pleased to know that the basics are still the same as buying fodder and grain/concentrates:

› Know what’s in the feed before you buy it. Get a feed test.
› Store it in a way that minimises spoilage and wastage.
› Make sure the ingredients fit your feeding system.
› Be aware of any potential hazards with different types of feeds.

Buy wisely
Figuring out what feeds to buy is difficult if you compare apples to oranges. Get a feed test and use the figures to compare the costs based on dry matter, energy and protein.

Are you adequately insured?
As the old saying goes, insure anything you can’t afford to lose. Review your insurance cover for hay and other feeds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to calculate</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Remember this</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dry matter</td>
<td>$ \frac{\text{¢ per kg DM}}{\text{Price ($ per tonne of fresh feed x 10}}} = \text{DM percentage} $</td>
<td>Canola meal $480/t delivered, 90% DM: $480 \times 10 = 53.3$¢ per kg DM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>$ \frac{\text{¢ per MJ ME}}{\text{Price per kg DM}} = \frac{\text{MJ ME per kg DM}}{11.5} $</td>
<td>Canola meal 53.3¢/kg DM, 11.5 MJ ME: $53.3 = 4.6$¢/MJ ME</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>$ \frac{\text{¢ per kg CP}}{\text{Price per kg DM x 100}} = \frac{% CP}{40} $</td>
<td>Canola meal 53¢ per kg DM, 40% CP: $53 \times 100 = 132$¢/kg CP</td>
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Plan to secure a proportion of your required tonnage of energy-dense concentrates on contract so there are no surprises.

With little pasture, you will have little protein to work with. Make sure you have secured protein sources.

Fibre Not often calculated per kg. Use a blend of fibre sources, including at least one with a high ‘effective’ fibre value to ensure cows’ long fibre requirements can be met. For further information on fibre see the Facts about fibre fact sheet at dairyaustralia.com.au/feedshortage

DM = dry matter; MJ ME = megajoules of metabolisable energy; CP = crude protein.

For more information, go to dairyaustralia.com.au/feedshortage
Feed supplies
Focus on securing your fodder requirements first, as fibre is essential in the diets of ruminants such as cattle. Then you can think about contracting energy-dense concentrates and protein sources to ensure a continuous supply.

Remember that co-products such as brewers grains are now commonly used by dairy farmers. Supply of co-products may be tied up by long term clients so it will take a bit of research to source some ingredients.

Feed storage options
Don’t wait until the truck arrives before you work out where to store feed ingredients. There are inexpensive feed storage facilities that work well in the short term but they usually involve higher feed spoilage and wastage costs. If you are looking longer term, concrete is a must.

Other storage factors to consider are:
› Will you purchase dry meals? These need to be kept dry and are subject to wind loss.  
› Will you purchase wet protein sources? Flies might be a problem.  
› Do you know about mycotoxins (fungal toxins) that can be found in some feed ingredients? Chat with an adviser to reduce the risk.

Don’t forget about your existing hay and silage supplies. They are too valuable to waste through poor storage. Wasted feed could be more expensive than a bit of concrete.

› Do you have good year round delivery access?  
› Where are the powerlines? Is it a safe delivery area?  
› Feed contamination with stones and dirt can be a problem if you don’t have a concrete base.

What’s possible?
Here are some example storage facilities for wet and dry co-products. What suits your feed system?

- Open air piled storage
- Sleeper wall bunker
- Straw bunker
- Roll-over tarp
- Concrete block bunkers
- Concrete bunkers
- Bunker with pitched sliding roof
- Bunker with flat sliding roof
- Bunker with fixed roof

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