

Nutritional Recommendations for Kyeyo Farm

- Separate pregnant cows from lactating cows. Consider drying cows out 2 months prior to calving (7 months pregnant) to increase their body condition scores to 3.5 prior to calving. This reduces both feed costs and veterinary issues, as the risks of ketosis and milk fever will be reduced. Additionally, cows that are dried out prior to calving tend to make up for lost production by producing more milk after calving than they would have produced in those two months anyway, thanks to improved body condition.
- Increase the amount of metabolizable protein in the lactating cows' ration. As currently fed, the amount of milk they can produce is limited by the lack of protein in their diet. Start with whole raw soybeans (1/2 kg Saturday 8/12, increase to 1kg Monday 8/13). Feed no more than 2kg of raw soybeans due to their high fat content, which in excess can reduce nutrient absorption.
- Consider also using whole cracked corn as an energy supplement. Corn has lower risks of inducing acidosis compared to wheat bran. If corn is too expensive relative to the boost in milk yield, wheat bran is acceptable. When you increase any part of the ration's energy or protein, make sure it is done slowly (1/2 kg increase every other day at most) and keep the importance of maintaining a diet of equal parts forage and concentrate in mind. Monitor responses in body condition, manure scoring, and adjust diets accordingly.
- If hypocalcemia (milk fever) persists in the herd after taking these steps, increase calcium supplementation for the milk cows only (NOT pregnant cows) to the rate of 100grams per cow per day.
- When a dry cow calves, increase supplement at a rate of 1kg/day until she reaches the same ration as the other milking cows, if possible. If not possible, try to minimize the abrupt change in diet however you can to reduce the risk of a displaced abomasum or similar veterinary problem.
- For calves, feed them 4 liters daily when young until they reach about 100kg, when they can be weaned. Supplement the milk with a small amount of high-starch concentrates such as corn meal, and some fish meal or other high-protein concentrate. Ideally their diet should be more than 20% protein in the first several weeks, and about 13% by the time they calve (usually at 24 months old in the US). Water should be available to them at all times. Ultimately, the efficiency of your calf rations should be determined by their weight at a specific age, such as 100kg at 6-10 weeks, 250kg at mating, 500kg at 24 months for calving, etc.
- Weaned heifers may be combined with the dry cow herd and grazed. Make sure they've reached breeding size (~250kg) prior to breeding. They require little supplementation. Corn/elephantgrass silage and a little protein supplementation (0.3-0.5kg soybean) should be adequate. Monitor their BCS, as a BCS of 3-3.25 will improve conception rates and future milk yields.