

# DOES IT PAY TO FEED \$7.00 CORN?

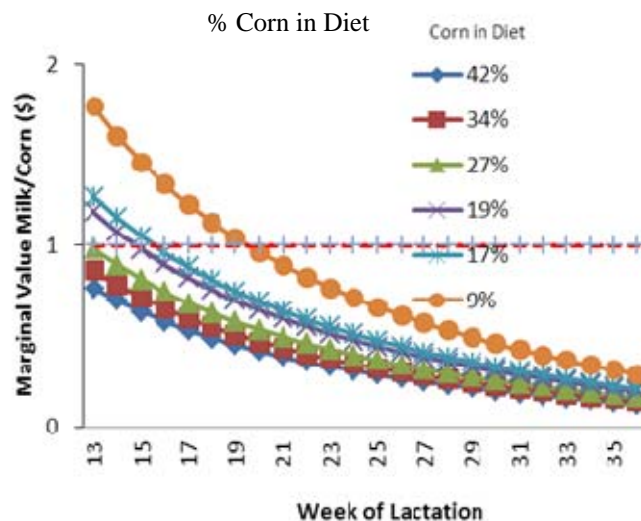
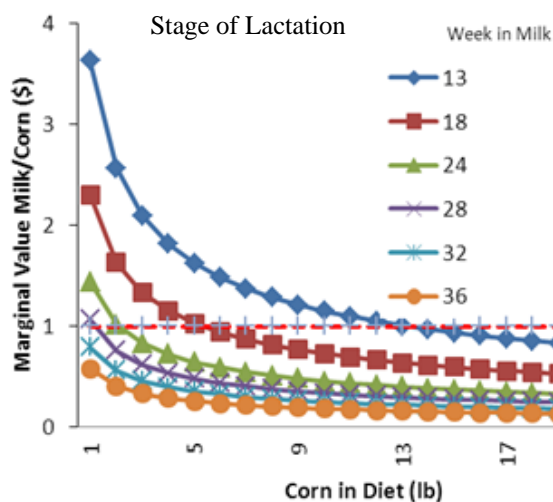
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For years feeding corn to dairy cows was a no brainer from an income over feed cost standpoint. Today, September corn sits at just over \$7.00 and paying that kind of feed bill will make many people rethink the conventional wisdom of feeding corn. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say that at a certain milk to corn price spread it no longer pays to feed high priced corn. The decision has to be made based on several factors including herd production, the amount of corn fed, and stage of lactation.

The first place to look is the amount of corn fed. We know that milk will increase more with the first pound of corn than it does with the twentieth pound of corn. Finding the most profitable level of corn for your herd can be a challenge. Victor Cabrera, UW-Extension Dairy Specialist has developed a tool to help determine that level. Research in this area was developed by Tessmann et al. (1991) that studied the response of 90+ cows to 5 diets (0 to 42% corn grain) for complete lactation periods. The diets used alfalfa silage, high moisture ear corn, and soybean meal in different proportions according to early (1-12 weeks), medium (13 to 26 weeks), and late (27 to 44 weeks) lactation stages.

The chart below was derived from the tool and it clearly shows that the lower the percentage of corn that is fed in the diet the more likely it is to pay for its self. The tool can be customized to show income over feed cost for different corn and milk prices. The charts below are based on \$21.00 milk and \$7.00 corn. Strait line is break even.



The tool helps you look at the level of corn in the diet and the stage of lactation for the cow. Stage of lactation is a big factor and the chart below shows the breakeven at different stages of lactation. Cows could be grouped based on stage of lactation to make the best use of high cost corn.

It is important to keep in mind that this tool only shows the economic break even for milk and factors like body condition score and reproductive performance are not taken into consideration. Feed decisions need to be made with the long term good of the animal and profitability in mind. Short term fixes will sometimes lead to long term disasters. However if cow health is maintained through other feed sources a change to the level of corn fed in the ration may be in order for the profitable dairy farm.

The tool is easy to use and can be found at <http://dairymgt.info/tools/CornFeeding/Corn.php> If you do not have internet access but would like a chart with a specific corn and milk price, please call the Clark County UW-Extension office at 715-743-5121 and one can be sent to you.