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MATRIX and BST?

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Though often unwarranted, over the past 20 years BST has become a highly controversial product in the dairy industry. In recent years, milk handlers and processors began urging producers to abstain from the use of BST and began the practice of paying premiums (mostly producer funded) to dairy producers as an enticement to sign affidavits attesting to non-use of BST in their herd. In many instances, milk handlers across the country have refused to accept milk from herds using BST. Needless to say, this scenario has left many producers confused, frustrated, and uncertain as to their own approach to the use of this technology. Over the past two years, we received reports from numerous producers concerned with potentially significant economic losses from discontinuing use of BST in their herds.

Our firm had been involved with BST early on from a nutritional perspective. We had the opportunity to work with several herds in Mexico using BST prior to its approval in the U.S. and with numerous herds in the U.S. after its approval by FDA. Our primary concern from the very beginning was not necessarily the controversy associated with the use of BST, but the economics associated with its use by our dairy producers. As professional nutrition consultants, we maintained a neutral position on the use of BST and simply tried to ensure our herds were taking care of the nutritional needs of their cows whether they used BST or not. However, we found ourselves questioning the economic viability of using BST because of the costs associated with its use and variation in level of response among our herds.

Nevertheless, many producers have basically been forced to terminate their use of BST without any viable alternative to its use. To date no product has existed which would solicit a similar milk response without the controversy and negative aspects associated with BST. Now there is finally an all-natural solution for today's producers---MATRIX®.

The following compares the features of MATRIX® and BST:

MATRIX®

- All natural blend of beneficial bacteria, plant extracts, and live yeast
- Administered in the animal's feed
- Promotes increased productivity and efficiency by improving cow health
- Promotes more consistent feed intake and improved nutrient digestion
- Increases nutrient absorption by both enhanced digestion and blood flow
- Helps negate the negative effects of stress especially heat related stress
- Promotes shedding of harmful bacteria
- Management tool for cattle consuming either high nitrate or endophyte-infested forage
- Although not a substitute for management, can benefit both high and low producing cows across management levels
- Based on improved milk yield alone (6-8lbs) results in a return on investment of at least 7 to 1 with improved health and longevity
- No controversy associated with consumer perception

BST

- Protein hormone synthesized in the lab by recombinant DNA procedure
- Administered by injection every 14-21 days
- Promotes increased productivity and efficiency but has compromised cow health in some instances
- May compound the effects of stress in some cows
- Results in increased but cyclical feed intake based on injection intervals
- Management tool for individual cows and prospective culls
- Tend to observe greater response in well-managed herds
- Based on the manufacturer's own analysis using 10lbs milk response after factoring in product cost, increased feed consumption, and labor and management costs the projected return is less than 2 to 1 with potentially diminished cow health and longevity
- Significant controversy associated with consumer perception

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