Optigen® Could be a Viable Substitute for High-Priced Soybean

Numerous attempts have been made over the years to control the ruminal release of urea by combining urea with starch molasses, cellulose, or oils. In 2005, Alltech Inc. developed Optigen®. Optigen® is a controlled-release urea product that involves coating urea prills with vegetable oil.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin recently conducted a study to determine the effect of Optigen® as a source of non-protein nitrogen on milk yield, milk composition, and profitability in commercial Wisconsin dairy herds. Diets were formulated to contain the same amount of nitrogen when substituting soybean meal for Optigen® and adding to the diet either corn grain or corn silage.

Here are the main results:

- Optigen fed at 114 grams per day per cow was an effective partial substitute for soybean meal as a source of rumen degradable protein.
- Milk yield was greater (>1.1 lb/cow per day) when commercial dairy herds were fed Optigen® than when they were not fed Optigen®.
- The use of Optigen® will improve the income over feed cost in most of the cases, except when milk and soybean meal are priced very low.
- The use of Optigen® will have more favorable income over feed cost when corn grain, corn silage, and Optigen are low priced and when milk and soybean meal are high priced.
- You can determine whether Optigen is a viable option for your farm specific conditions by using the **Optigen® Evaluator** available at: DairyMGT.uwex.edu : Tools.

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