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## Rumen Health

Rumen health is the key to cow health and many problems with milk production and fertility may relate to poor rumen function.

The main problem with rumen health is the problem of **acidosis**, which will lead to:

- Poor rumen environment with high acidity
- Poor growth or maintenance of the useful rumen bacteria
- Rapid rumen emptying leading to incomplete digestion of food materials in the rumen
- **Poor food conversion leads to poor performance and reduces profits!**

### Monitoring of rumen function:

- Milk proteins and milk fats (use of recording data)
- Rumen PH testing (results should be in the region of 6-7)
- Consistency of the dung and frequency of defaecation
- Cleanliness of the cows' hindquarters
- Evidence of excessive swishing of the tail
- Foot problems, with development of solar ulcers

### Once problems are found then steps should be taken to reduce the acid load:

- Ensure that the diet meets recommendations with respect to sugar/ starch percentages, and NDF levels
- Improve the chewability of the diet to increase salivation
- If feeding cake in the parlour, then this may have to be reduced – feeding these 'slugs' of cake will frequently cause a temporary rumen acidosis. Rumen pH should be measured 2-3 hours after feeding to demonstrate the degree of acidity.