

How Do DDGS Impact Heifer Weights?

RESEARCH SUMMARY

New research from South Dakota State University demonstrates that including DDGS in heifer diet formulations can reduce feed costs by almost 10%. Since feed costs represent over 50% of the cost of raising a replacement dairy heifer, implementing this heifer feeding strategy can significantly lower heifer-raising costs and benefit producer profitability.

BACKGROUND

How the replacement heifer grows and specifically how the animal deposits fat and protein during early growth stages affects subsequent milk production. Research has demonstrated that heifers gaining too much weight and having too much fat deposition produce less milk during lactation. As a result, nutritionists often hesitate to feed an ingredient such as DDGS that provides a source of energy and protein, even if DDGS may contribute to a lower ration cost, because they feel replacement heifers will gain too much during growth.

Researchers at South Dakota State University (Anderson et al., 2016) designed a study to investigate this question and determine how feeding increasing concentrations of a reduced-fat DDGS will affect heifer growth and metabolism.

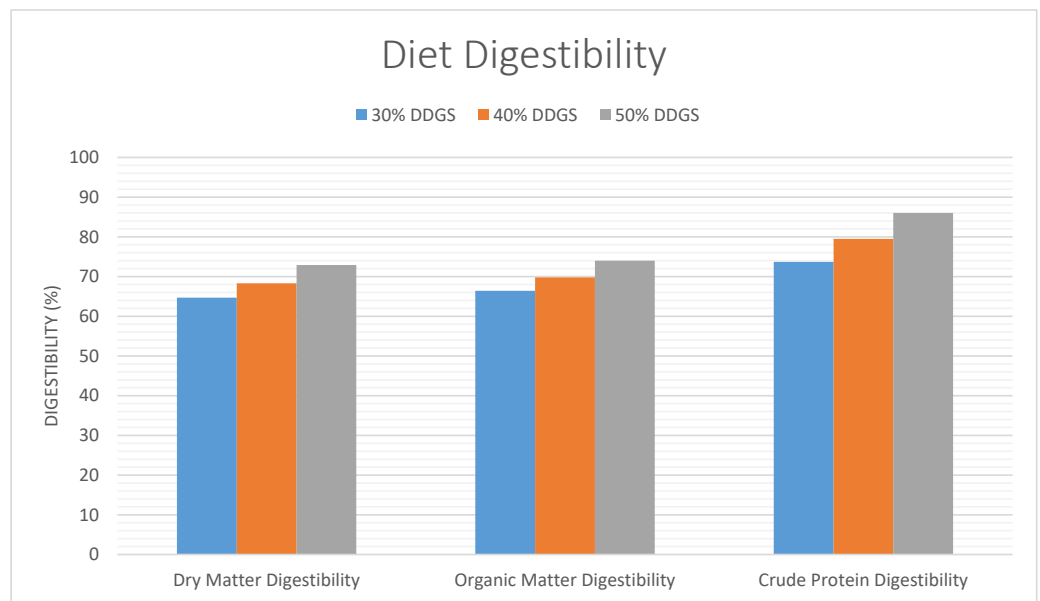
The feeding study consisted of 48 heifers that averaged 200 days of age. Treatments included diets with 30, 40, or 50% of the diet dry matter as a reduced-fat DDGS. All ingredients and inclusions remained the same except for grass hay that investigators removed when adding the additional DDGS. In order to adjust for greater protein and energy concentration of the DDGS diets, the researchers limit-fed the diets to achieve similar average daily gains.

RESULTS

(Figure 1)

- Heifer performance did not differ between treatments, with an approximate 1.9 lb ADG for the heifers across the entire study.
- Frame growth measurements showed very little difference.
- Diet digestibility differed significantly; see Figure 1 (right).

These results demonstrate that feeding a reduced-fat DDGS can support optimal performance for replacement heifers and reduce feed costs.



However, in order to prevent excessive gain, consult your nutritionist for specific formulation and management strategies.

*These results are not a guarantee of nutritional value, as laboratory results are influenced by factors beyond the control of POET Nutrition.