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Producer Spotlight

Who: Ben Dickman

What: Verrado Dairy

Where: Buckeye, AZ

In 1963, Ben Dickman's grandfather moved the family dairy from the Phoenix suburb of Glendale further west to Buckeye, Arizona. At that time, he told Ben's dad, Fred: "You'll never have to worry about moving again."

But growth of the Phoenix area's sprawling housing developments caught up with 1,100-cow Dickman Dairy, which Fred owns, and 1,300-cow Verrado Dairy, which Ben owns.

"Now we have housing developments on every side of us," Ben says, "so we're back in the same position as 50 years ago."

Ben's dairy shares its name with the neighboring "master-planned community" also called Verrado, which is an up-market housing development that boasts about its old-time, small-town America atmosphere.

"We fit right in," Ben jokes. "With our dry lot corrals, we do look a little antique."

But looks can be deceiving. For example, cow comfort at Verrado Dairy is far from old-time. During the summer, daytime temperatures get well over 100°F for

Verrado Dairy: "More milk from the same cows"



Ben Dickman, Verrado Dairy

extended periods, so Ben keeps his Holsteins comfortable with misters and coolers in both the corrals and the milking parlor. Also, milking three times per day and sustaining a high level of production year-round means he's achieving effective optimization of the Verrado Dairy total mixed ration.

Both Ben and Fred had long experience and good performance with Diamond V Original XPC™. Then, in early 2015, they were among the first to try NutriTek®, Diamond V's most advanced natural nutritional health product for all dairy animals.

"What really caught my eye about NutriTek," Ben says, "was the research that showed increased milk production. To get more milk, you need a healthy rumen, so doing an even better job of supporting rumen health made sense to me. My experience with Original XPC over the years led me to think NutriTek could work for me, too."



"My dad and I were doing really well with Original XPC," Ben adds. "So, for NutriTek we were aiming for 2 lbs. per cow per day more milk."

Verrado Dairy and nearby Dickman Dairy are similar operations – almost the same size with comparable genetics, management, employees, technology, etc. So, Ben and Fred decided to do their own test of NutriTek.

"I was the first to go on the product," Ben says. "It took about 3 weeks to see any kind of results. Then we started NutriTek at my dad's place and the same thing happened – it took about 3 weeks before we started seeing results."

"Both of us were on the product for about 45 days, then we took it out of the TMRs – first mine, then my dad's – and we both went back to Original XPC."

"After coming off NutriTek, both of us saw the beneficial effects of the product continue for about a month, then there was a gradual decline to our previous levels of performance. We figured the bugs in the rumen ramped up with NutriTek, then settled back with Original XPC."

"Neither of us wanted to get off NutriTek, but we had to follow our test to the end. We wanted to be sure the additional milk output we were getting was really coming from the product. When we saw production tailing off after a month or so, then we knew NutriTek was working for us and we put it back in the TMRs. All our goals were met. We definitely saw the increased production and there were minimal rumen issues."

"Our comparison," Ben adds, "was NutriTek versus Original XPC, which already was giving us good performance. Now we've been on NutriTek a good 10 months, right through one Arizona summer and looking at the next."

Looking to the future, Ben sees challenges ahead for Verrado Dairy, Dickman Dairy, and others in the expanding Phoenix metro area and suburbs. However, he says, going forward, strong technical support from trusted experts is going to continue to be a great advantage.

At Verrado Dairy, the TMR Audit® was performed by Dr. Kevin Leahy. Dr. Bill Sanchez provided DV Monitors milk data analysis and technical assistance in evaluating NutriTek. Rick Gintner, regional sales manager, has acted as liaison between the Diamond V Dairy Advisors and Verrado Dairy.

Ben says he can recommend NutriTek to other dairy producers: "We paid attention to what Diamond V said about NutriTek – the trials and other research. But the proof was in our results. 'In the pudding.' Without a doubt, we did see the results. I'm very confident in NutriTek.

"We might look 'antique'," Ben says with a laugh, "but we're producing more milk from the same cows."



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