

## Feed Shrink May Be Robbing You Blind

condensed from Dairy Herd Management (May 2011)

Managers at Linn Willow Creek Dairy in north-central Kansas were noticing spoiled silage on the top of their bunker totaling 6 to 8 inches deep. They concluded that this spoilage was costing them thousands of dollars every year.

Keith Sather, dairy nutritionist from Dress, Wisconsin, claims that shrink in corn grain can easily range from 3.5 percent to 10.7 percent or more. This is due to corn getting too old, going out of condition, getting eaten by birds, rodents, deer or waste due to transport, mixing or loading.

By some estimates, the average producer in the Midwest may be losing 15 percent of corn silage due to spoilage, wildlife and other factors. Mike Brouk, extension dairy specialist at Kansas State University, once helped a farm calculate how much feed it was losing in the commodity sheds, and it turned out to be costing the farm 13 to 14 cents per cow per day. (For a 250 cow herd, that amounts to over \$12,000 per year.)

Consider soybean meal. A farm could be losing 8 to 9 percent of it due to wind and other factors, Brouk says. If you are paying \$380 per ton for soybean meal, a 9-percent loss means you are actually paying \$414 per ton. That is a \$34 per ton difference, or 1.7 cents per pound. If you are feeding 4 pounds in the ration, that is 6.8 cents per cow per day.

You are never going to completely eliminate shrink. But reducing shrink by just 3 percentage points can make a huge difference. On a 1000-cow dairy, reducing shrink by 3 percent – at today's feed prices- could amount to \$65,700 a year. (That is \$65.70 per cow, so you can do the math for smaller herds.)