

BST PANEL

Roger P. Natzke
Department of Dairy and Poultry Sciences Department
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

Introduction

The use of BST hit the Florida dairy industry with a flurry in spring of 1994. Milk production went up sharply with many dairymen using the product. Contrary to common concern there appeared to be little or no effect on milk consumption.

A number of research studies were conducted in Florida prior to the approval of BST by the FDA. Those projects showed very positive results even in those studies which were initiated in the dead of the summer. The studies demonstrated that with proper shade and feeding we can use the product successfully.

A major limitation of the Florida trials is that most were carried out for 6 months or up to one full lactation. No multi-lactation studies were initiated. Data in the literature would suggest that the response may be less in the second and subsequent lactations.

Measuring the effects of BST are difficult under controlled research conditions and nigh on to impossible under normal use conditions. In retrospect, a major mistake was made when marketing of the product was initiated. Dairymen began using it with no controls. Thus when the summer heat stress arrived and milk production dropped there was no way for dairymen to determine if the total drop was due to the heat or if they were experiencing less response from BST. The Department started using BST as well, but due to the fact that we only used it on a portion of the herd we had what amounted to a control group. It was interesting that after we were using it for a few months, the gut reaction of management was that we were not getting much of a response. That was a false reaction and Dr. Wilcox will review the analysis of the data from our dairy research herd.

We know that you are aware of all the research data and that you are probably more interested in hearing how your fellow dairymen are using the product under their management systems and their evaluation of how it is affecting their bottom line. Let's turn it over to them.