

Making dairy feed additives economical? Solve your challenges in four steps.

BY PAPILLON AGRICULTURAL COMPANY

One of the challenges with the use of functional additives such as prebiotics, probiotics, postbiotics, plant compounds and exogenous enzymes is that they are often applied to cows in a generalized sense. Rather than select additives to target a specific on-farm issue, we instead add a product to generally improve cow health and productivity.



While this method of additive use can lead to herd improvements, the likelihood of success is lower, and the risk of no return on investment is higher. This generalized approach leads to two negative outcomes. One, becoming risk averse to trying new additives that may be useful to herd health and productivity. Two, the development of a diet with so many additives included over time that the cost is high and the value of any one additive unclear.

A simple solution to these challenges exists in a 4-step process that leads to an easy, effective and economical additive program.

Step 1: Determine challenges and goals

It is critical to both understand farm goals and understand the primary on-farm challenges. The use of on-farm sampling, through a program like the [Papillon DigesTTive Checkup](#), can provide detailed insights into potential issues such as rumen dysbiosis, lower gut inflammation or pathogen colonization.



Scan to see how the Papillon DigesTTive Checkup can optimize herd health and efficiency.

Step 2: Evaluate potential additive solutions and develop an additive program

Once goals and challenges have been identified, evaluate additive options in the market based on effectiveness, cost and compatibility to identify the best. From there a custom blend of additives can be developed to strategically target the identified goals and challenges.

Due to the complexity of the additive market, it is recommended to work with a trusted Papillon advisor to identify the best additive solutions for your herd.

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Step 3: Let the data guide you

Data is the most useful tool in determining if an additive is providing value. Collecting simple measurements of milk and component yield, body weight, health events and reproductive status can provide insights as to how the herd is responding to an additive program and if that response provides a worthwhile return on investment.

By supplementing this data with on-farm sampling programs like the Papillon DigesTTive Checkup, we can determine how an additive is providing value to the cow within the digestive tract.

Step 4: Don't forget to revisit and re-evaluate

The final (and often forgotten step) in developing a successful additive program is re-evaluation. Cows are continually changing and an additive program should change with them. It is recommended programs be evaluated at least annually, but also any time a major diet, health or management change occurs on-farm.

Using this 4-step program that identifies a clear target for success, we can shift the narrative around additives from a category of products that work sometimes, to a category of products that adds measurable value for cow health and productivity challenges.