

**Farm Name:** Plowman Dairy  
**Operators' Names:** Ralph, Matt and Adam Plowman  
**Farm Location:** Yelm, Wash.  
**Dairy Consultant:** Steve Puntenney  
**Herd Size:** 590 Holsteins  
**Rolling Herd Average:** 28,500M, 3.5%F, 3.0%P  
**Problem:** Metritis  
**Solution:** Animate<sup>®</sup> Anionic Mineral Supplement

It is not often a feed supplement added to a cow's ration causes an almost immediate, noticeable herd response. "Sometimes, adding new products can be a matter of faith," says Matt Plowman. "It's advertised to work, but you're not certain that the results will match."

Plowman Dairy is located in Yelm, Wash., in the shadow of Mt. Rainier. On a clear day, the snow-capped peak stands like a sentry over the 590-head dairy. Together, Matt and his father Ralph and brother Adam manage their Holstein herd with an impressive 28,500-pound rolling herd average.



Plowman Dairy's 590-head Holstein herd has an impressive 28,500-pound rolling herd average.

Sound management and attention to herd health details have helped them increase their rolling herd average. "We try to get the best out of each cow we milk," Matt explains.

Ralph Plowman moved to Yelm in 1977 from California. Starting with 150 cows, he slowly built a solid dairy by always putting a priority on herd health. "Any time we can keep our cows healthy, they produce more, our cull rates go down, and our vet bills stay low," Ralph says.

### Reducing Metritis in the Herd

The top priority for the dairy was to reduce the incidences of retained placentas and metritis. While not a significant problem on the dairy, the Plowmans knew any incidence was costing them money.

"We simply thought that metritis and retained placentas were a cost of doing business," Matt says. "We figured all transition cows went through a phase of lower dry matter intake, reduced production and mild forms of metabolic disorders."

The Plowmans estimate that each case of metritis costs them about \$200 and about a 15 percent reduction in milk yield. So, it didn't take many cases to show up in the bottom line.

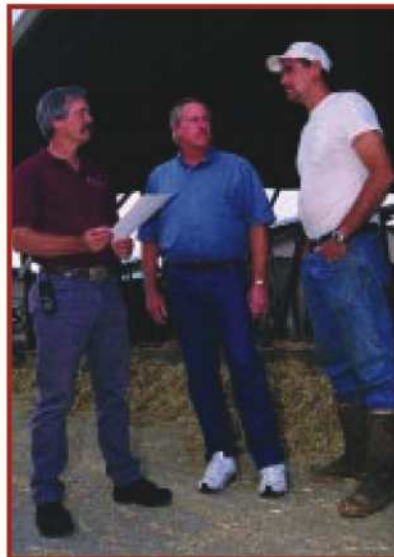
Working with their nutritionist, Steve Puntenney, the Plowmans added Animate<sup>®</sup> Anionic Mineral Supplement to their transition cow diet. The results were almost immediate.

"We thought Animate might make a little difference. But the change was significant and noticeable. Dry matter intake of the close-up cows went from 26 pounds before using Animate to 33 pounds," Matt says. "Our incidences of metritis dropped significantly. And, there were no palatability problems."

Just as important, cows were being bred back faster. "Before Animate, cows would come into first heat at about 60 days. Under our program now, cows are coming into heat, on average, at 30 days," Matt says.

Veterinary bills and medical costs also were reduced. "At \$200 per metritis occurrence, we can buy a lot of Animate," Matt says.

Puntenney, an independent nutritionist who has been working with the Plowmans for nearly two years, ensures the dietary needs of the herd — especially the transition cows — are being met. The Plowman's transition cow ration includes flaked corn, distillers canola, wet brewers grain and corn cannery waste. Their dry forages are alfalfa and barley hay.



Steve Puntenney (left) discusses ration analysis with Ralph (center) and Matt Plowman.

**"At \$200 per metritis occurrence, we can buy a lot of Animate."**

**— Matt Plowman**

With the variety of feed sources used, the Plowmans test every ration. "Feed can be high in potassium in this area, so balancing rations is extremely important," Puntenney says.

Puntenney also tests urine pH. Even though Animate is recommended at one pound per head per day, Puntenney will tweak the feeding rate to ensure a desired pH level.

### Starting the Transition Cows On Time

The Plowmans start feeding dry cows the transition diet, which includes Animate, 21 to 30 days prior to calving. Because the three-week window before calving is so important, the Plowmans err on the side of having the cows in this transition stage longer. "If we tried to get every cow in exactly at 21 days, we'd end up missing by a few days," Matt says. "We like to play it safe."

"We continue to hear positive comments from producers like the Plowmans," says Dr. Dirk Axe, director of technical



Transition cows at the Plowman Dairy receive Animate Anionic Mineral Supplement 21 to 30 days prior to calving. With the addition of Animate, the Plowmans say incidences of metritis have decreased, and dry matter intake has increased.

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services, marketing and product development at IMC Feed Ingredients. "Customers rave about increased pre-partum intake and improved post-partum performance and health with Animate in the close-up diet."

Costs* of Retained Placenta	
Die (%)	1
Culled (%)	18
Milk Loss (lbs.)	450
Milk Dumped (lbs.)	300
Extra Days Open (days)	19
<b>Average Cost per Case</b>	<b>\$285</b>

\*Costs include lost milk production, veterinary charges, extra work caring for cows, drugs and discarded milk. Source: University of Illinois

Animate supplies essential nutrients that meet the nutritional needs of transition dairy cows and is based on the best science available. In particular, Animate delivers a highly available form of chloride, sulfur and magnesium in a palatable and concentrated product.

Unlike other products, the magnesium in Animate plays a critical role in supplying a high level of available magnesium to the rumen — the major site for magnesium absorption. Magnesium works in concert with anions, chloride and sulfur to counter hypocalcemia and related metabolic disorders in the transition cow.

"IMC Feed Ingredients wanted to find a way to harness the benefits of anionic minerals into a palatable product," says Dr. Axe. "From the feedback we're getting, Animate is the answer."

### Future is Bright

Today, the Plowmans continue to focus on herd health to boost productivity and reduce input costs. "We have a good group of folks working with us," Ralph says. "We are all dedicated to ensuring maximum production."

They're extremely pleased with the benefits Animate has produced for their herd. "Healthy cows benefit our bottom line," Matt says.

Puntenney agrees. "I fully expect the Plowman's rolling herd average to increase steadily," he says. "They do an excellent job of taking care of their cows. Good management pays off."

**Animate**  
Anionic Mineral Supplement