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# Rethink Your Farm Business

Choosing an Animal Feed Company: Let's Chew This Over!



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Whenever I meet with a new client, one of the very first questions I'm frequently asked is, "Which feed company is the best for my farm business? Is it Shurgain, Coop, Purina, BlueSeal, NutriPartenaire, Lyrco, Nutri-Expert, Bélisle or some other supplier?" (I apologize for any suppliers that I may have missed. No hard feelings!)

To be politically correct, I could mutter some kind of vague answer such as, "Well, you know, they ought to all be good companies. It's hard to tell. Which one do you think is the best?"

The truth is that some suppliers are better than others or should I say, more flexible than

others. Among them are nutrition advisors who are definitely better than others. They may be more in tune with you, the client. Finding THE RIGHT ONE for you is the tricky task.

### Know thyself

The first thing to keep in mind is that the reality of your business is no one else's reality. You and your farm business are unique and so are your needs and objectives. A good nutrition advisor is the one who, regardless of what his computer and software programs dictate, understands that numbers and livestock don't always add up. Therefore, if he has never laid foot in your barn, you'd better start to worry. As a matter of fact, a good nutrition advisor is the one who pays you a visit on a regular basis to ensure that his feed program stays on track or to make necessary changes and adjustments. Animal feed calculations cannot rely on numbers alone and the only way to achieve good results is by trial and error.

### Know what you want

Once you find someone who cares about the good health of your herd, make sure that he or she also cares about the good financial health of your farm business. Among other things, does your nutrition advisor know how

to count? For that matter, do you? Do you know what your target costs should be? When feed costs of a dairy herd go from \$8 up to \$23 per hectolitre, and these, incidentally, are real numbers from actual Quebec dairy farms, then it ought to keep you awake at night! Being able to compare your results with those of similar farms is a must. Whether it is feed costs, weight gain or dairy productivity, realistic objectives are the keys to success of a profitable farm business. If you don't know what your goals are, how can you expect your nutrition advisor to know?

### Know with whom you are dealing

A good business relationship, besides being based on trust, is often also based on a personal friendship. There is nothing wrong with such a relationship, however, be aware that your friendship might come in the way of heartbreaking business decisions that you probably will keep postponing until eventually, you have no other choice. Mixing emotion with reason is a classic marketing strategy, and it works! I'm not saying that your nutrition advisor will befriend you just to acquire business from you, but the company will surely put pressure the sales team to get your account. Trusting your nutrition

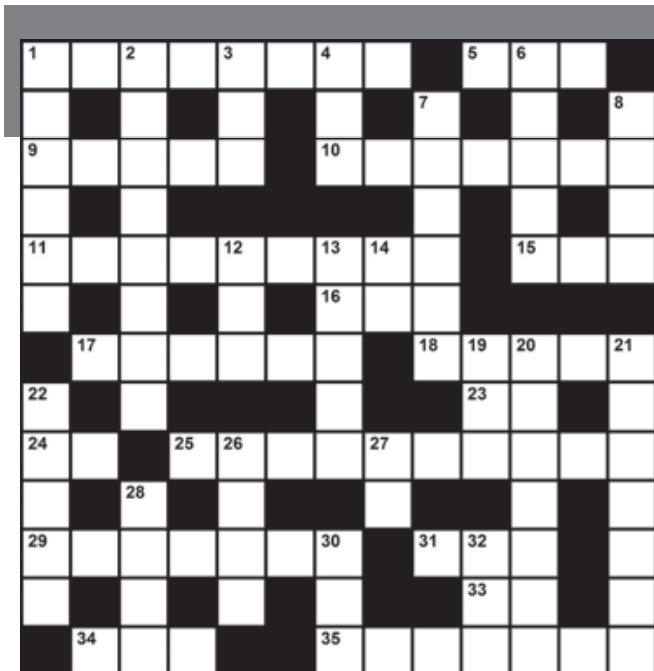
advisor is important, but so is being able to question his or her work, not as a dictator, but as a team partner.

A good nutrition advisor is the one who, while working with you and for you, will also succeed in meeting the company's requirements. That is certainly no easy task, and some companies will put so much restraint on their personnel, that it deprives both them and you of any space on which to build a real business relationship. In the final analysis, it all comes down to one thing, namely the person behind the nutrition advisor and the nutri-

tion advisor behind the person, namely you.

Now it's your turn to tell me which feed company is the best for you?

*Having worked for over 16 years for various financial organizations, Robert Savage, founder of Solutions affaires experts-conseils, has established an innovated approach to farm consulting services. With the help of a multidisciplinary team of experts, Solutions affaires experts-conseils can get your farm on its way to greater profitability by working with your existing resources and by having access to a network of professionals involved in agri-business.*



## QFA CROSSWORD

by Myles Mellor



### ACROSS

- 1 NRC Canada stated it has no current plans to research this controversial agricultural DNA alteration (2 words)
- 2 Breakfast item that is egg based
- 3 Rooster's mate
- 4 Hops drink
- 5 Number of million acres Ontario has suitable for growing wheat
- 6 Climbing plants
- 7 Environmentally friendly
- 8 Wearing away
- 9 Remain ploughed but not seeded (2 words)
- 10 Prepared
- 11 «Roses \_\_\_ red ...»
- 12 Variety
- 13 Herb
- 14 Item talked about
- 15 Former
- 16 Farmers' markets offering (2 words)
- 17 They can be found in heads
- 18 Corn on the \_\_\_
- 19 R and B singer, Greene
- 20 Recipe word
- 21 Type of salmon

### DOWN

- 1 Group of geese
- 2 Breakfast item that is egg based
- 3 Rooster's mate
- 4 Hops drink
- 5 Climbing plants
- 6 Spider's creation
- 7 Annoying little insect
- 8 Alias, for short
- 9 Territorial possessions
- 10 Alternative
- 11 Fresh \_\_\_
- 12 It will become fertilizer for the next year's wheat crop
- 13 Romaine, for one
- 14 Vichyssoise vegetables
- 15 Bird like an ostrich
- 16 How-do-you-do
- 17 Very dry
- 18 Help cry
- 19 Hardwood tree

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