



Experts Talk about the “Art and Science” for Achieving Excellent Forage Quality

Content provided by Krone North America

To fully understand what all goes into achieving the highest quality forage, we asked the experts: nutritionists, dairymen, and chopper operators from around the country. Because these are the people who live the forage quality challenge every day. They all agreed on one thing: achieving the highest-quality forage requires a team of experts, working together, who apply both ART and SCIENCE to the process.

Nutritionists strive for consistency

Chris Wacek-Driver does nutritional consulting work with dairy producers and companies. Chris has a degree in Dairy Nutrition and did her research in forages.

About forage quality, Chris says, “Forages are the cornerstone of the dairy cow diet...they are critically important, not just from production and efficiency, but also for the overall health of the animal as well. But it’s hard to get good forage quality here in the Midwest, or anywhere in the country, for that matter. Consistency is the most important thing, but also the hardest thing to achieve.”

Chris stresses the importance of pre-season goal setting, and post-season evaluation. “Before harvest you need to have a meeting, including the



▲ **Chris Wacek-Driver** is a Nutritional Consultant, and owner of Forage Innovations LLC, in Bay City, Wisconsin

farm owner/manager, the nutritionist, and chopper operators. This team determines the goals, for example:

“We need to determine what the chop length should be, and how are we going to measure it...and can we get the same result time and time again? The guy running the chopper is critical. He is responsible for proper chopper maintenance, as well as knowing how to run the machine to get the right result.”

As for the forage harvester’s role, “I know the Krone chopper is a really good machine that stands up well. And Krone has been innovative, they’ve kept on the front-end of the industry.” About forage quality, Chris says, “They are a good machine. We get what we need out of them.”



▲ **Luciana Jonkman** is a Nutrition and Management Consultant with Progressive Dairy Solutions, in Merced, California.

Luciana Jonkman consults with dairymen and companies for Progressive Dairy Solutions, in Merced, California. Luciana earned a graduate degree in animal nutrition.

Says Luciana, “Cows crave consistency, so as a nutritionist my focus is to deliver the same ration every single day to that pen. If silage is the base of the ration, then that silage needs to be consistent...I want to make sure that chop length is consistent, every single piece.”

Luciana says that to get consistent, high-quality forage, you must be able to adjust chopper settings to changing conditions in the field. “We’ve found that the Krone equipment has the ability to be flexible to what we need to have happen in the field, depending upon the conditions.”

In summary, Luciana says, “We want to make sure that the silage is cut properly, not only horizontally, but also cut vertically...and making sure the kernels are exploded.” She adds that the Krone equipment has the flexibility to deliver that consistent forage quality in changing conditions.

The Dairymen’ goal: Feed the highest quality forage



▲ **Alex De Jaeger** runs a dairy near Chowchilla, California

Alex De Jaeger is a 4th generation dairy farmer from Chowchilla, California.

Says Alex, “I’ve been told that there are two key things for running a successful dairy operation: Forage quality and keeping the cows

comfortable. To manage our forage quality, we work closely with our general manager, and the people who do our chopping, to make sure that when we harvest our corn silage the moisture accuracy is perfect, and that we’re putting the best quality silage in the pit.”

The forage harvester plays a critical role in delivering high quality forage. Alex contracts with Diamond J Dairy harvesting company, who run all Krone BiG X Forage Harvesters. “Our kernel processing always seems to be on point. We’ve sent ours in to the lab, and our processing score is way higher than it even needs to be... so we’re very happy with the Krone equipment.”



▲ **Theo VanderMeulen** is Harvesting Manager for Capstone Ranch, Madera, California

Theo VanderMeulen is the harvesting manager at Capstone Ranch in Madera, California. As for forage quality, Theo says, “The Krone corn head is a big advantage...you can see the bottom of the stalk feeding in first...the accuracy of your length of cut all starts there, because it’s feeding in uniform...opposed to the competitors’ machines, where you see the stalk feeding in all different directions.”

Theo concludes, “The fact is nothing beats the quality that comes out of the spout of a Krone machine. And we feed a lot of animals...silage quality is so important.”

Chopper Operators apply their expertise to consistently meet the goals

Jon Orr is owner of Orrson Custom Farming, based in Applecreek, Ohio.

“It’s all about getting an accurate length of cut. And that’s where it starts, right up front. When you’re in grass, rye, triticale, whatever crop...those six feed rolls are very valuable, rather than the

four rolls most other competitors have, because they get a hold of the material better, and that lets you control the length of cut better.”



▲ **Jon Orr** is owner of Orrson Custom Farming, Applecreek, Ohio

“When it comes to corn silage, the Krone EasyCollect head does such a great job of feeding the stalks in butt first. That’s means we’re cutting the stalks evenly across the stalk, not up and down the stalk. And that’s why we can maintain an excellent length of cut with the Krone.”

Danny Constant runs forage harvesters for Ruhl Customer Harvesting in Ellsworth, Wisconsin. He likes being included in the forage quality meetings for each customer. “We work with the nutritionists to learn what the results need to be...we want to get the right length of cut...the right moisture (in hay)...make sure your kernel processing scores (in corn) are where they want them to be, so the dairymen can get the most milk out of the cows.”

About the choppers, Danny says, “We ran Krone before, went to John Deere, now we’re back to Krone. The Krone does a really good job with kernel processing. That’s so important, we have to get good feed out of the spout.” ■



▲ **Danny Constant** is a forage harvester operator for Ruhl Custom Harvesting in Ellsworth, Wisconsin.