

The GHG to milk ratio

Feed efficiency is saving the environment while improving milk production

by ANNE COTE

THE MOST COMMON environmental factors associated with any type of livestock business seem to be greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and phosphorous levels in manure. At least that's the message from public policy groups, according to Frank Mitloehner from the Department of Animal Science at the University of California.

Mitloehner said the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported 3.4 per cent of the country's GHG emissions were generated by livestock, while transportation produced 26 per cent and energy production accounted for 31 per cent. Using these numbers as a rationale he questioned the wisdom of encouraging consumers to reduce meat or dairy con-

sumption in order to reduce GHGs.

According to Mitloehner, the solution lies in what the cows eat, not what people eat.

Mitloehner and his colleagues decided to take a life cycle approach to determine the true environmental impact of milk production and find strategies to mitigate it.

He told delegates at the Western Canadian Dairy Seminar in Red Deer in Mar. 2014 that today's production goal is to lower the GHG to milk ratio and the way to do that is to improve the individual cow's productivity. It's not impossible. He said carbon monoxide emissions per glass of milk are 70 per cent less than they were 30 years ago as a result of increases in milk production per cow and how efficient the