

Looking back at the Feeds and Nutrition course 2024

In this year's Feeds and Nutrition course a new module was introduced: Recent developments in animal nutrition. "In the upcoming editions, we will include this module in the course", says Sharon van der Vaart, Operations Manager Educational Services. "Each year, we will choose topics that are in the center of attention, and this year we addressed sustainable production, environmental impact and mineral balance in animal nutrition."

Next to this new module, the 'golden oldies' were not forgotten. The attendees could choose from a variety of modules, ranging from raw materials, feed processing and formulation, nutrient evaluation and animal specific (poultry, swine and ruminants) aspects of nutrition. The modular setup of the course enables each participant to compose a custom-made program to fulfill his or her needs.

Recent developments - sustainability

Sustainability is a hot item in agriculture and food production systems and this also affects the animal nutrition sector. Consumers and retail organizations demand information on the environmental impact and carbon footprint of food items. First speaker in this session was Laura Nobel of the Global Feed LCA Institute (GFLI). This independent institute develops and maintains an Animal Nutrition Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) database to support meaningful environmental assessment of animal nutrition products and stimulate continuous improvement of the environmental performance in the animal nutrition and food industry.

"High-quality and representative data, and validated through a robust methodology are crucial for reliable LCA reporting", Nobel explains. "Our goal is worldwide acceptance of our database and widely used by the public and private sector." GFLI also strives to enable partners to make their own data available: "This enables us to include LCA-data of a wide variety of feedstuffs, and to distinguish between regions of origin", Nobel says.

Wilfried van Straalen, Jan Fledderus and Roger Davin dived deeper into environmental aspects of nutrition for ruminants, swine and poultry respectively.

"We need to consider that environmental impact comprises more than the carbon footprint", Fledderus emphasizes. He presented the outcomes of four scenarios to improve sustainability of pig feeds. In all cases, feed costs will increase, because an additional parameter is included in the feed formulation. "When we focus our feed formulation on one aspect of sustainability, the outcome may be detrimental for other sustainability parameters", Fledderus shows. "For example: formulating swine feeds without soya or palm will lead to the inclusion of more ingredients from European origin, but also to an increase in crude protein intake so reduced nitrogen efficiency. If we want to increase nitrogen efficiency, we need to include more human edible ingredients, more soya and more imported ingredients to obtain a nutritional adequate feed."

These examples illustrates that we need to consider 'waterbed effects' if we want to make our animal feeds more sustainable, Fledderus concludes.

Van Straalen focused in his contribution on methane emissions from ruminants and nutritional strategies to reduce these emissions. In poultry, the protein source of the feed has a large impact on sustainability, Davin shows. "Our calculations reveal that certified deforestation-free soya results in a lower carbon footprint of poultry feed than replacing soya with alternative protein sources, like faba beans."

Lowering the environmental impact of animal feeds and nutrition turns out to be complicated, because there are many aspects to consider. As Kermit the Frog already sang: "It isn't easy being green".

Recent developments – mineral balance

The role of minerals in pig, poultry and ruminant nutrition was discussed by Vanessa Lagos, Jan Fledderus, Roger Davin and Wilfried van Straalen.

Minerals play important roles in the metabolism, and the relation between positively and negatively charged ions in the feed also impacts feed intake, nutrient digestibility, health and production performance. The speakers in this part of the course recommend to pay attention to mineral balances in all production stages of farm animals.

The attendees of the Feeds and Nutrition course of Schothorst Feed Research come from all over the world. This year's edition welcomed people involved in animal nutrition from 18 countries, including Canada, India, Iran, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Czech Republic, France, Germany and of course The Netherlands.

As in previous years, the 13th edition was highly appreciated by the participants. Here are some quotes from this year's participants:

"Congrats. I highly suggest SFR to continue with this course as it is unique within the European feed sector."

"It is a good scientific training based on the latest research that provides a general nutritional overview."

"I liked it a lot! Also the people and the hospitality and willingness to answer the questions."

"Loved the welcome pack. The course itself was excellent."

"This is my fourth year. The best course!"

Niet voor publicatie

Noot voor de redactie

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