

Proper Sample Identification

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Providing detailed sample descriptions is rarely a top of mind concern when filling out sample submission forms. Several Dairyland employees, who previously were Dairyland customers, have stated variations of, “If I had known how important sample identification was when I was sending in samples, I would have put more effort into it.”

While customer descriptions of samples are not the only metric Dairyland uses for determining NIR calibration selections, quality control parameters, or energy calculations, they are a valuable starting point. The more detailed information the lab has about a sample, the more value we can provide through enhanced NIR calibrations, narrower outlier detection, more relevant interpretation information, and better customer support. In addition to adding value to an individual sample, detailed descriptions add long term value by creating more robust databases. For example, if samples are routinely labeled with species information (Italian ryegrass vs orchard grass vs fescue) there is an opportunity to create specific NIR calibrations and interpretation ranges.

Information that can be included to create more value include:

- 1) **Species** – This has the highest value because it allows differentiation of populations with known nutritional differences, especially in digestibility.
- 2) **Species within a mix** – Sometimes multi-species mixes work well by NIR (Italian ryegrass mixed with BMR sorghum-sudan grass). Sometimes they don’t work at all (soybean silage mixed with corn silage). Providing identification of species within the mix gives the lab an opportunity to communicate any concerns about the viability of testing a mix by NIR.
- 3) **Variety** – This is especially helpful for identifying BMR varieties.
- 4) **Cutting** – This is not important to the laboratory but can be useful when looking for trends in your data.

In short, with species and variety details included in sample descriptions, Dairyland can provide more value in the form of improved accuracy, interpretation information, and customer support.

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