

Shoot for 24 months for heifers' first calf

UNIVERSITY PARK - Freshening heifers at 28 to 30 months of age or more adds to the overhead expenses of operating a dairy herd.

Most heifers should calve for the first time at 22 to 24 months of age, says Penn State Dairy Specialist Dick Adams.

It is important, however, that they reach adequate size without over-conditioning by freshening time. This is necessary to obtain good production and keep calving difficulties at a minimum, he says.

Most heifers of the large breeds become sexually mature when they reach a bodyweight of 550 to 600 pounds. They may be bred at a weight of about 750 pounds when about 13 to 15 months

old. Sexual maturity, however, may be considerably delayed if animals are underfed.

Excessive flesh or fattening at any age should be avoided to prevent depressed milk production and reduced life span.

Sometimes growth depression occurs in younger calves. This often stems from underfeeding of liquid before weaning.

In other cases, low quality milk replacers containing a relatively high proportion of vegetable products rather than milk solids may be involved. Setbacks due to disease, especially scouring and pneumonia, may prevent good gains, Adams says.

A lack of selenium may result in depressed gains and diarrhea in calves and heifers. Inadequate water intake or poor quality water may greatly reduce growth at any stage beyond weaning.

Calves under six months need to eat four to six pounds of concentrate mixture per head and enough forage to provide about 1.2 pounds of hay-equivalent per cwt. of bodyweight daily.

Depressed growth in heifers over six months of age frequently results from underfeeding of forage.

Many dairymen do not realize how much forage is needed by replacement heifers. Hay-equivalent

intake must reach 2.0 to 2.2 per cent of bodyweight daily, he says.

A good approach to follow is to full-feed forage. This means that young stock should have forage available at least 20 hours daily. Feed forage to the point where there is a refusal of about five per cent daily.

If forage quality is high and heifer start to fatten, reduce amounts fed accordingly.

Lack of minerals, protein and energy may be involved in depressed growth. Internal or external parasitism also may contribute to a problem.

A balanced ration is required by all animals: young and old.

Red meat

production up 5%

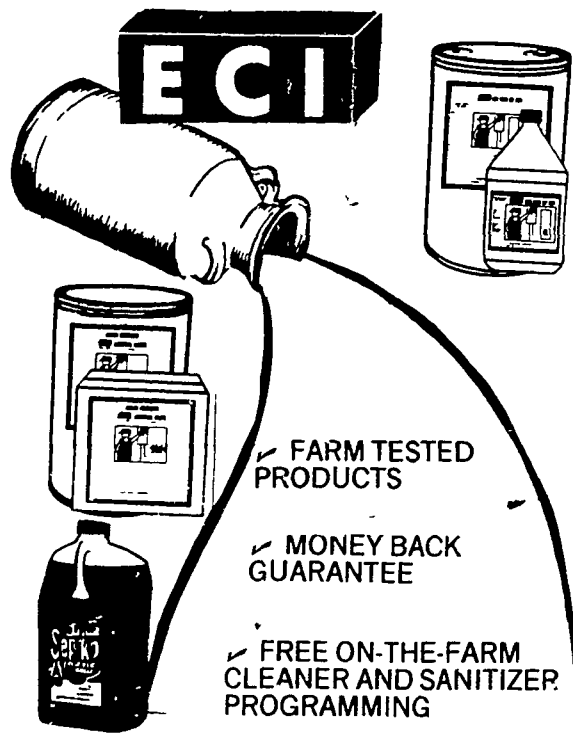
HARRISBURG — Commercial red meat production in Pennsylvania during April totaled 86.7 million pounds, up five percent from April 1979.

Cattle slaughter at 58,500 head down three percent while calf slaughter at 20,700 head was down less than one percent from last year. Hog slaughter at 305,100 head increased 17 percent from a year ago.

The number of sheep and lambs slaughtered totaled 11,600, down 30 percent from April 1979.

Nationally, commercial red meat production during April totaled 3.31 billion pounds, an increase of 15 percent from April 1979. Beef production at 1.74 billion pounds was up 10 percent while veal production at 30 million pounds declined nine percent.

Pork production totaled 1.51 billion pounds, up 22 percent from April 1979. Lamb and mutton production increased 12 percent to 28 million pounds.



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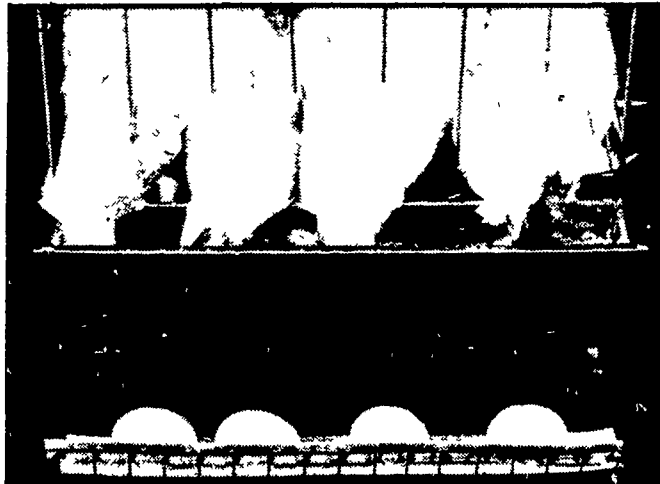
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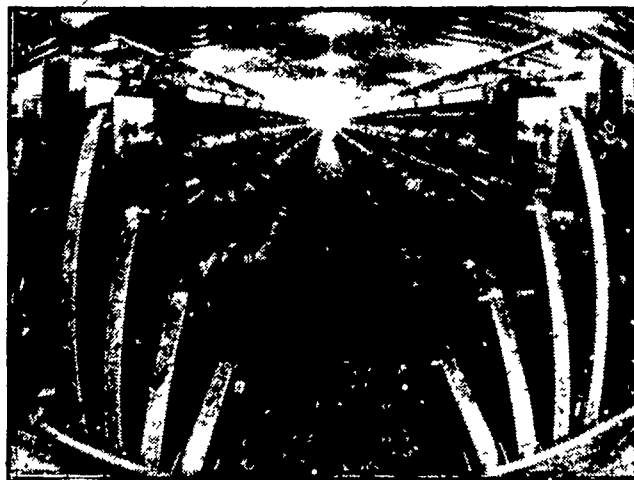
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