

# The Dairy Business

By  
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**SOME EASY TO USE "THUMB OF RULE" IDEAS**  
When you have to make a decision rather quickly, and don't need to be too concerned about pin-point accuracy, thumb rules can be very useful. Since most people have a whole pocket full of these rules, I thought you might like to add a few that are not so commonly known.

Be aware, however, that a rule of thumb will only get you in the ballpark — it may not win a close game. But you can't lose by much either!

**PASTURE RENT** — What can you pay? Actually, there are as many ideas on this as pastures to rent. But some economists at PURDUE University have pinpointed some unique relationships between pasture rental rates and the prices of other commodities.

1 Rental per cow per month = 2.2 times the price of corn. Example: Corn at \$2.90 x 2.2 = \$6.38 per cow per month.

2 Rental per cow per month = price of hay per ton divided by 8.5. Example: Hay at \$54 a ton — 8.5 = \$6.35 per cow per month.

3 Rent per cow per month = price of fat cattle divided by 11. Example: Cattle at \$70 — 11 = \$6.36 per cow per month.

So, even though they use a different commodity as a guide, they all come out fairly close to the same answer.

Since cows differ widely in

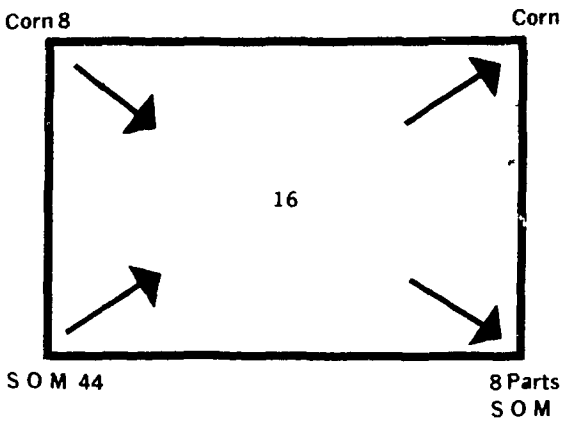
age and weight, calculate the number of head by animal units. One animal unit is the equivalent of an 1100 pound cow. A yearling steer is therefore equivalent to 75, or 3/4 of one unit. Calves between 6 and 12 months are worth 5 units, and 3 to 6 month old about 3 units. Simply multiply the animal unit coefficient by the agreed rental rate, times the number of animals to establish the total rent per month for the pasture. Of course, rental agreements are always complicated by many other variables, including fences, water, fertility, and forage species. At any rate, make sure that there is a written agreement and that both owner and renter understand and agree on the terms.

**HOW MUCH IS SILAGE WORTH**

(Purchased from storage?) — This question is timely, because silage is frequently a cash commodity when a herd is dispersed or farms are rented. The value of silage on a per ton basis is fairly easy to calculate if you have a forage analysis.

Penn State forage analysis provides a "Hay Equivalent" (HE) factor. The HE factor is simply the number of pounds of silage that are needed to replace one pound of hay of similar quality. Wilted grain silage at 70% moisture has an HE of 3.0. Good corn silage also has an HE of 3.0, on the average.

For either grains or corn



silage, the better the quality and the lower the moisture, the lower will be the HE factor. Simply divide the current price of a ton of hay by the Hay Equivalent factor of the silage in question, and you have the value of a ton of silage. For example, haylage at 50% moisture has a HE of 1.8.

If hay is worth \$54 a ton, divide by 1.8 and get \$30.00 as the value of the haylage. Consult a silo capacity chart to estimate the tons of silage in any given size silo.

**PROTEIN BALANCER**

— Now, if I haven't already lost you, let's tackle one more formula. It's called the "Pearson Square", and is used to balance a feed formula for protein. What are the proper proportions of grain and protein concentrate mix to give a 16 percent ration?

1 Draw a square and write the desired protein percent in the middle.

2 At the upper left corner, write the percent protein in your available grain (Ear corn is about 8 percent).

3 At the lower left, write the percent protein of the protein supplement (Soybean oil meal is about 44 percent).

4 Subtract across the diagonal and write the figures at the opposite corner. At the upper right you will have the proportion of corn to be mixed with the proportion of soybean meal that appears at the bottom right corner. When mixed in the proportion of 28.8, the protein will average out to 16 percent.

Again, we have probably over simplified a rather complex problem. A modern grain ration for dairy cows can't be formulated that easily. We haven't calculated all the other necessary goodies like

minerals, vitamins, net energy etc etc. But we can use it as another quick and easy "Rule of Thumb".

Do you have other favorite thumb rules or easy to use formulas? Let me know what they are, and I'll share them in a future column.



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