



Brockett's Ag Advice

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Summer heifer management
Flies, gnats, and other biting insects plus hot sticky weather sure "play hob" with animals and people who can't get inside.

For the past month our heifers have been coming down from the hill between 6:30 and 7:30 each morning. We can almost pin point the time the gnats start swarming

by their migration to the shade of the free stall barn. They go back out again about dusk. We try to make sure they have plenty of hay available in the barn.

I feel sorry for those poor animals who have to be out in the type of weather and insect laden air we're having this summer. How can they grow properly if

most of their daylight hours are spent milling around fighting the biting "bugs".

Control insects

Controlling insects may be harder this year than in most years. A wet June must have been ideal for them. In years past, we've sprayed, treated, and dusted our heifers which usually has produced results. This year all this treatment has been of limited value.

That doesn't mean to quit, however. Some suggestions: eliminate lush green weeds around buildings; keep stored manure in one place where it can crust; treat buildings or shelters where animals congregate; treat the animal (ask your county agent for

approved material).

Feed

Feed some good forage to supplement pasture. You may also want to feed some grain if your forage is not top quality. Feed minerals and vitamins as part of a grain mix or separately.

If you feed silage, haylage, or grain, do not allow any of this material to stay in the feed bunk more than 24 hours. In the hot humid weather we've had recently, perhaps even 24 hours is too long.

Clean out leftover feed and discard it. If it stays in the feed bunks too long, it will become spoiled.

Spoiled feed is bad for 2 reasons. First it will spoil any fresh feed

that it touches. Second it will reduce the palatability of all feed put into the bunk because of both taste and odor.

The worst mistake a farmer can make is to say that the animals will have to clean up all of the feed in the feeder before they get any more. That is very poor economics.

Heifers appreciate clean cool water for the same reason you do. Waterers or watering tubs should be cleaned periodically. Cleaning is especially important in hot weather because animals need more water and feed and other organic material that gets into the water spoils faster than in cold weather.

Always put yourself in the place of your animal. Would you relish stale crackers (stale hay, haylage, or silage)? Would you like to drink water from a glass filled with partly rotten grain, grass, or silage? Would you appreciate it if you were forced to stand out in the sun with gnats "buzzing" you all day?

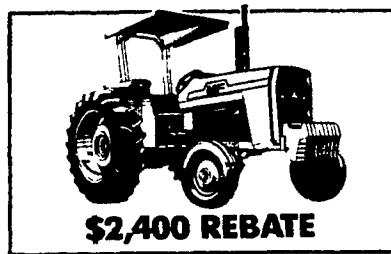
Remember that well-grown heifers will probably make more profit for you than undersized ones. They are bigger so they can eat more. Since they already have good growth, more of their nutrients can go into producing milk. They can probably enter the milking string at an earlier age due to better size and a better developed reproductive system.

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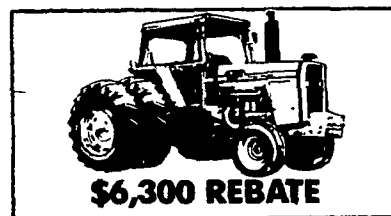
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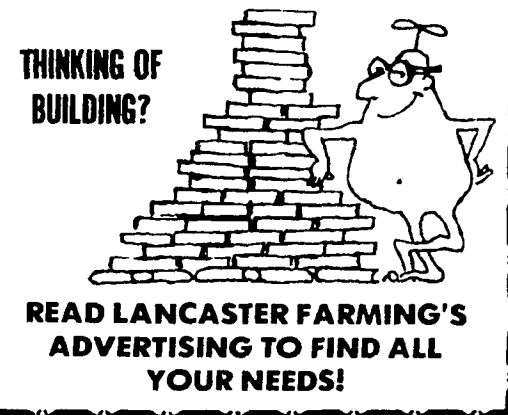
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