

# Adding more cows is not the answer in Pa.

**UNIVERSITY PARK** — The number of dairy cows in Pennsylvania continues to increase although most other states show a decrease in the number of cows. This increase is partially the result of farmers adding cows to increase profits, but this method of money making is only short term and can not be continued if small dairy farmers want to stay in business, says Jack Kirkland, Penn State Extension agricultural economist.

In 1972, the total number of dairy cows in the state was 684,000. This number has risen to 730,000 in 1982. The top ten milk producing counties housed 50 percent of the cows, and since the number of farms in the state has decreased in

the last ten years, these figures show that the dairy industry is becoming more concentrated and many farms are adding more cows.

Many times, farmers in the state increase the number of cows because that is the easiest way to increase production and profit, Kirkland says. But this method is not suited for Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania is mostly made up of small family-owned farms, he says, and many are dairy farms because that industry is best for limited acres. On these family farms, the owners may not spend as much time as they might on making internal changes to better management practices, so to

compete they increase production by adding cows.

But because of natural limitations in the state, this method will not work and more efficient farms are still the best answer.

Pennsylvania farmers are not able to have the kind of super-farms found in California and the south because the cold climate makes it necessary to house the animals indoors for much of the year. The state also has a limited amount of land to grow feed, so to expand the farm too much, the farmer will probably have to buy at least part of his feed.

"You can't be profitable if you have to buy your feed," Kirkland

says. Adding more cows may increase profits, but it will not decrease costs. Even though farmers may be making more money, they will also be spending more on feed and farm machinery and with the surplus of milk the country has today, prices of milk will probably not go up enough to cover these additional expenses.

"Being more efficient is the answer when the price of milk goes down," Kirkland says. "You have to have a cut in cost or you will go out of business."

Even the new government bill that pays the farmer to reduce production will not benefit many farmers, Kirkland says. The

people who will benefit most from this plan are those who have not had increases in production in recent years, or people who were thinking about selling out.

For the rest of the farmers, Kirkland says he sees continued increases in the amount of milk produced.

To help these farmers, Kirkland says he sees a continued need for research to let the farmers make more income per cow with less cost.



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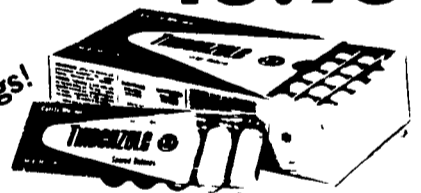
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