

Future Looks Good With Current Rates Of Milk Production

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania milk production figures supplied by the United States Department of Agriculture for July showed a decrease in cow numbers from a year ago. Also, total production decreased by 10 million pounds from the same period.

USDA figures show that in Pennsylvania in July 1986 there were approximately 732,000 cows in the state compared to 720,000 in July of this year. The Milk Termination Program may be having the greatest affect on the decreasing number of cows in the state.

The production decrease from 867 million pounds of July 1986 to 857 million pounds for July 1987 show a 1.2 percent decrease. According to Jack Kirkland, dairy marketing specialist at Penn State, the decrease may be up very slightly due to the affect the hot weather has been having on the cows.

Production per cow rose slightly at .4 percent from 1185 pounds per cow in July 1986 to 1190 pounds per cow for July 1987. Milk production per cow for June 1987 was at 1210 pounds per cow compared to July 1986 which was at 1185. However, the total production for June 1987 was at 866 million pounds, just 1 million pounds less than the total production for July 1986 at 867 million pounds.

For the 21 major dairy states, which account for approximately 84.5 percent of total national production, total milk production was at 10.433 billion pounds of milk in July 1987. That is a .3 percent decrease from July 1986 which was at 10.468 billion pounds of milk. According to Kirkland this is the first time Pennsylvania has been down more than the states production.

In the 21 states the number of milk cows decreased by 2.7 per-

cent from this time last year while milk production per cow rose by 2.5 percent. For July 1986 there were approximately 9.032 billion cows and in July 1987 there were 8.785 billion cows. Milk production per cow was at 1159 pounds for July 1986 and in July 1987 it was 1188 pounds.

According to Kirkland, the future continues to look better for farmers in 1987. All figures considered costs are down. There is a reduction in the number of milk cows due to the buyout program and also to the farmers who went out of business for other reasons. The situation looks good for the farmers as prices continue to improve throughout the year, which he feels they will. In addition, with butter and cheese prices on the Chicago market above support prices the outlook is very favorable.

"Unless we see a tremendous surge in production, prices will hold up for farmers," said Kirkland.

Also if production does not increase in the first half of 1988, the Minnesota and Wisconsin prices may not go down.

The average price for milk cows in Pennsylvania for July 1987 increased by 10.7 percent from \$840 in July 1986 to this year's price of \$930.

Presently in the northeastern states which include Pennsylvania and all the states to the north, the measure of profitability, the milk price to feed cost ratio, is at 1.61 up from 3.9 percent from July 1986 at 1.55. This is above the estimated breakeven point of 1.33 denoting the relative profitability of the dairy industry.

Part of ratio increase is due to the decrease cost of dairy ration. The average cost per ton in the

northeast last year was approximately \$160. This year a decrease

of 4.4 percent puts the cost at \$153 price for feed in Pennsylvania may have been even lower.

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