

Strengthen Dairy Herd Through Management

Dairy replacements essentially make up the very foundation of a dairy enterprise. Improvement of a herd is possible when culled cows are replaced by well fed, healthy, genetically superior and properly managed replacements. An excellent way to improve herd production is to mate cows to the best bulls available and then to feed and

manage replacement heifers so they can express their true potential.

Replacement Needs

Dairymen face two major problems when it comes to meeting yearly replacement needs. One of these is calf losses and the other is meeting the high demand of herd turnover.

Annual calf losses in some herds run as high as 30%. Under good management, calf losses should not be more than 5%. Herd turnover, either voluntary or involuntary, ranges from 25 to 35% in most PA herds. This means replacing 25 to 35 cows out of every 100 each year. To be able to do this, calf losses must be kept low. High calf losses allow you little or no selection of replacements and very little culling pressure other than involuntary culling can be placed on the herd.

The Calving Environment

Ten days prior to calving, separate any cows that are to calve from the other animals in your dry cow group. A well drained paddock or small pasture lot with available shade makes a good place for cows to freshen in spring, summer and early autumn. In late autumn and winter use a clean, roomy, well-bedded maternity stall. A maternity stall should provide about 150 to 200 square feet of space for large cows. Large square pens allow the cows more freedom of movement and allow dairymen area in the pen if assistance is necessary. An important point to mention is that maternity stalls must be cleaned and disinfected between calvings to keep any disease in check. Cows should not be allowed to calve in

stanchions, free stalls, tie stalls or group loose housing areas, if it can be avoided.

At calving time, cows need plenty of room and some good footing as well as clean dry bedding. Sawdust is not recommended to be used as bedding in maternity areas. Research has shown that sawdust bedding increases the mortality rate of calves and increases the incidence of mastitis in dairy cows. Sawdust adheres to the mouth of calves and may carry pathogenic organisms to the digestive tracts of the calves.

Calving Time

Whenever possible, someone should be present at the time calving or shortly thereafter. Either the cow or the calf may need assistance. Usually immediately after birth, the cow will lick the calf. This aids in drying the calf and stimulates circulation and breathing. If the cow does not lick the calf dry upon delivery, rub the calf briskly with a dry towel. Sometimes artificial respiration is needed to initiate breathing. You should also see that the calf's nostrils are clear of mucus to facilitate breathing. Paint the calf's navel with a 2% tincture of iodine solution or some other suitable disinfectant to prevent any infection at this time. Since these umbilical vessels connect directly

to various organs in the body, infection at this site can be very harmful to the newborn.

It is also very critical that calves receive colostrum as soon as possible after birth, preferably within four hours after being born. Most healthy calves are on their feet within 30 minutes and nursing within an hour. Before the calf is allowed to nurse its mother, the cow's teats and udder should be washed and sanitized with a solution containing 200 parts per million of chlorine, or another approved sanitizing solution, to decrease the amount of disease transferred to the calf through the digestive tract.

In extremely cold weather, it may be necessary to use blankets or a heat lamp to keep the calf warm.

Remember, good calf management begins with plenty of preparation before the calf is born and must be a continual ongoing process on all dairy farms.

A.J. Heinrichs & L.J. Hutchinson

Pasture Supplementation

Too often dairymen either over-supplement or under-supplement cows on pasture. When young, actively growing pasture is available in good supply, milk cows often may perform well on a grain to milk ratio of 1:4 to 1:6. Use of hay or silage on good pasture generally should not exceed 12 to 14% crude protein. When pasture is over-mature or scant in supply, the feeding of stored forage may need to approach 70 to 100% of barn-season levels. In addition, narrower grain to milk ratios of 1:2½ to 1:3 may be needed. The grain mix may need protein and mineral levels that approach those on all stored forage, depending on the type of pasture and intakes of stored forage of various kinds. Use of well-balanced rations are just as important on pasture feeding as any other time of the year. Take a good look at your pastures for cows and young stock several times weekly. Move the animals to fresh pasture as needed and/or adjust your feeding to pasture conditions. Clip and chain harrow pastures as necessary to keep them in an actively-growing state and prevent wastage around manured spots. Make certain cows have shade and water available on pasture.

R. S. Adams

Farm Calendar



(Continued from Page A10)

South Montrose Community Church, 7:30 p.m.

Lebanon PA Holstein Association, Zoar's Luthern Church, 7 p.m.
Swine Management Workshop at Bittinger Fire Hall, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Wednesday, October 26

Wood Products Conference, through October 27. Hershey Lodge and Convention Center.
PSU Forage test van in Wayne Co. at Belmont Fire Hall, Pleasant Mount, 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Thursday, October 27

Lancaster County Poultry banquet, Olde Hickory Inn, 6:30 p.m.
Penn State Tax Workshop,

through Oct. 28. Meadville, David Mead Inn, 45 Chestnut St., 1 block east of courthouse on Chestnut St.

Wayne Co. Extension annual meeting, Central United Methodist Church, Honesdale, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 28

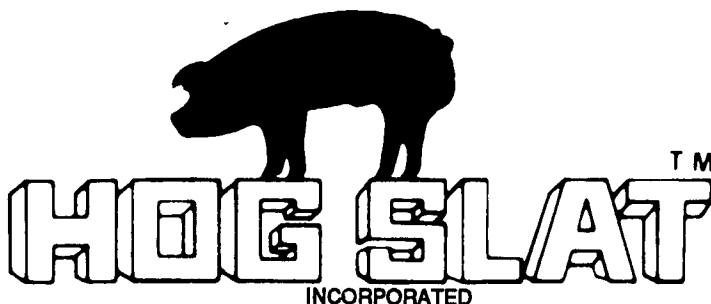
State Dairy Youth Workshop, PSU, through Oct. 29.

National Shearing Symposium, Denver, CO. through Oct. 29.

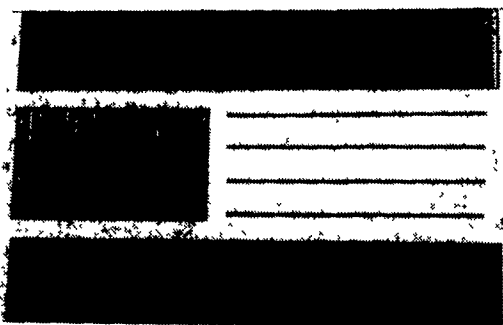
Saturday, October 29


PSU Dairy Club Nittany Lion Fall Classic, Ag arena.

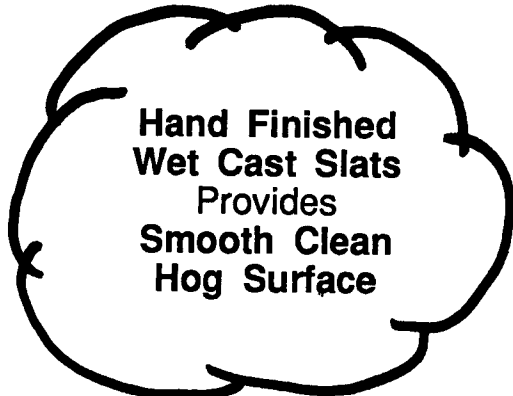
Benefit Auction for Amish accident victims, York Co. Livestock Sales, New Park, 9 a.m.



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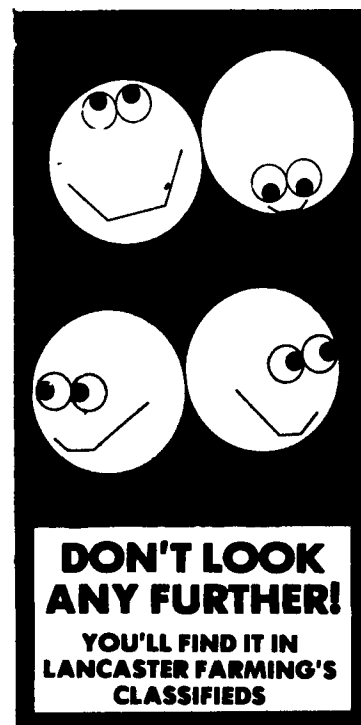
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