



Stricker has chosen a hilly area of his farm for the intensive pasture program.

which the cows are grazing that they obviously have their preferences for the young shoots with leaves.

"They don't like the heads," Stricker said.

In one pasture he has planted puna chicory for which he had to obtain a permit from the state Department of Agriculture because the plant is considered noxious. "The cows really like it," Stricker said.

In the current pasture, he places a 25-gallon tub of water. Throughout the 12-hour time segment the heard is in the pasture, cows wander up to the bowl to drink as they need.

"They just come up and drink a gallon or two, then go on," Stricker observed.

It may take some work to keep your eye on the clock and move the herd so often, but Stricker points out some of the advantages.

"The tradeoff in labor is, instead of mixing feed, I'm now moving fence and water," he said. Stricker explained that all he does to move fence is move cross wires to close off the area in which he wants the cows to graze.

If it rains, no problem. The grass is still good and the cows can still graze. Last summer, he said, he had trouble

**CONNIE LEINBACH**  
Berks Co. Correspondent

Connie Leinbach is a freelance writer and graphic designer living in Douglass Township, Berks County, just west of Boyertown, with her husband, Steve, an editor for The Morning Call in Allentown, and her son, Alec, 5, and daughter, Catherine, 3.

Before launching out on her own, she was a reporter for the Reading Eagle-Times and covered a variety of beats, including the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

She enjoys interviewing members of the farm community and learning about farming, and welcomes suggestions for stories.



Connie Leinbach

making hay because of the frequent rainy weather.

He noted that farmers can't make the kind of quality with cut hay as is found in the pasture grass.

"As soon as you cut it, it loses its nutrients and moisture," he said.

Since the cows are outside more than they are in the barn, Stricker saves money running fans and buying feed. There is less manure hauling because the cows spread their own manure in the pastures.

Stricker hopes this program will reduce his veterinary bills, since after attending conferences on the subject and talking to other farmers he learned that cows become healthier with this program.

While the cows are being milked twice a day, Stricker and his herdsman Glenn Ocher supplement their diet with 14 pounds of high moisture shelled corn and 16 pounds of corn silage per cow per day. This provides energy they're not getting in the pasture.

Before, the cows were fed 22 pounds of high moisture shelled corn, two pounds of soy meal, five pounds of roasted soybeans, 20 pounds of corn silage, 40 pounds of haylage, plus vitamins and minerals.

Now the cows are eating 140 pounds of grass a day at 28 cents a hundredweight of pasture. Feed cost per hundredweight of milk has dropped almost \$3.

Milking cows also receive mineral supplements in the form of a free-choice mineral bin containing 14 different powdered minerals and salt. The bin is in the exercise lot outside the barn and the cows just eat what they want. The dry cows and bred heifers don't get the free-choice minerals.

Stricker and Ocher are building portable mineral feeders to place out in the pasture for the cows to get minerals while they graze.

"That's the ideal situation," he said.

Apparently, the grasses contain most all the nutrition cows need as Stricker's milk production has remained the same.

"That was my biggest concern — that production would drop," he said. Now, his rolling herd average is 21,900 pounds, the same as when he started the program.

Stricker notes that the challenge of this method is managing the grass so that it doesn't develop heads before the milking cows can eat it.

It's a challenge that's akin to unlocking the secrets of nature.

"I like working with nature and God, and seeing the whole system work," he said.

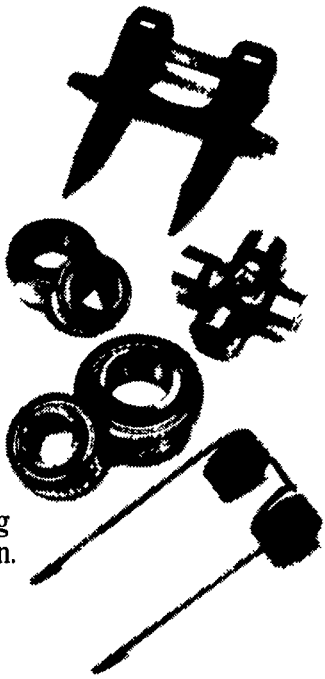
Farmers interested in learning more about this method can observe it firsthand during a grazer's meeting at Stricker's farm from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Thursday, July 22.

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As they need it, the cows wander up to the 25-gallon water tub and drink, then resume grazing. Stricker moves the water to each pasture the cows are in.

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