

## GLENN'S UDDERINGS

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### Are Culling Practices Killing Your Profits?

How are culling decisions being made in your herd? Are they made by you or by the problems that plague cows in your herd? Are you able to upgrade your herd by selectively culling the poorer cows, or are too many of your better cows departing the herd prematurely because of problems. What prices do you get for cows that leave the herd; are they as high as what they could be?

Are your annual replacement costs per cow high due to rapid turnover of cows? On the other hand though, are you turning cows over fast enough to make room for the next crop of genetically superior heifers?

These factors can have a tremendous impact on herd profits, and answers to many of the above questions can be found in your Penna. and Raleigh DHIA Herd Summary reports. As an example, let's look at averages for Lancaster County herds whose records were processed at Raleigh. They are shown in Table 1.

The average culling rate for Lancaster herds was 35%. The

average cow spent 2.9 years in the milking herd (100 divided by 35).

What affect does this have on annual replacement costs per cow? To calculate this, we need to know the net cost of bringing a replacement into the herd, which is the average cost of a replacement minus the average sale value of cows removed from the milking herd. Let's assume the average cost of a replacement is \$1100 (cash plus non cash cost); and the average sale value of cows removed was \$500 (breeding stock, culls and dead cows). The net cost of the replacement is \$600 (1100-500). The average cost per year is \$600 divided by 2.9 years or \$207. If average longevity was 4 years (25% cull rate) the annual cost per cow would drop to \$150 (600 divided by 4); that's a savings of \$57 per cow per year.

About 29% of the cows that left the herd were 1st calf heifers (6 out of 21). Also, 29% of the 1st calf heifers were removed (6 out of the 21 that entered the herd). The culling rate for 2nd lactation cows was lower, as one would expect. It was 27% (4 out of 15). The highest culling rate was in the

3rd lactation and older group. It was 46% (11 out of 24).

What should the culling or removal rate be? The above figures would suggest it should be somewhere around 25-30%. Below 25% you don't save much on replacement costs and you are not introducing enough new genetics to the herd. These guidelines will vary depending on sale value of cattle and on why cows leave the herd.

Of the reasons listed as to why cows left the herd, only two of them are voluntary decisions made by the owner; they are cows sold for dairy purposes and cows sold for low milk production. Cows sold for dairy purposes boost cattle sales. Genetically inferior cows culled for low production help to upgrade the herd. Both tend to enhance farm profits.

All of the remaining reasons for cows leaving the herd can be termed involuntary decisions; the farmer didn't have a choice in the decisions. The decisions were made for him by the nature of the problems in the herd.

These involuntary decisions can be very costly because of: 1.) the prior costs of treatments, 2.) repeat breedings 3.) lost milk production, 4.) reduction in market value of cattle sold, and 5.) because of the premature loss of good genetic stock.

It would be nice to be able to sell at least half of these cows voluntarily for dairy purposes or for low milk production. If we look at Table 1, we can see that only 4 of the 21 cows that left the herd were sold voluntarily. That's only 19%! The bulk of the culling decisions (81%) were made by the problems cows have, not by the farmer!

This is a disturbing trend that faces many dairymen, and one that challenges all segments of the industry. We need to work harder to keep good cows in the herd longer.

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## PFA/FB Has Full Agenda

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — The 43rd annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association (PFA) will take place Nov. 15-17 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey.

Several hundred farm leaders, including 169 voting delegates, will gather to elect officers and set policies for the statewide farm organization. PFA is a voluntary, general farm organization which provides information, services and a voice in public affairs to 23,542 farm and rural families.

Voting delegates will be tackling grass-roots policy resolutions which originated in PFA's 54 county associations on a wide range of farm issues. Delegates will also be considering by-laws amendments including a recommendation to change the name of the organization to the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. PFA is part of the nationwide American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). Almost all of AFBF's state organizations use the "Farm Bureau" name.

Voting delegates will elect a PFA vice president and directors for eight of the 16 districts represented by the PFA State Board of Directors. Corresponding vacancies on the PFA State Women's Committee will be filled by

appointment at the annual meeting.

In addition to business, the PFA annual meeting agenda will include information conferences, guest speakers and special events.

A "Measure the Candidates" forum is to be conducted during the annual meeting, featuring announced candidates from both parties for the 1994 governor's race.

Planning to participate are U.S. Rep. Tom Ridge, Lt. Gov. Mark Singel, state Sens. Earl Baker and Mike Fisher, state Rep. Bob O'Donnell, State Attorney General Ernie Preate and businessman Charles Volpe.

PFA will present awards during the annual meeting for Distinguished Service to Agriculture and the Outstanding Young Farmer competition. The top county in farmers' association program achievement will be honored with the All Star award. Information conferences will take place throughout the three-day event, covering topics ranging from farm financial planning and farm safety to crime prevention and Ag in the Classroom.

The PFA annual meeting will conclude Wednesday, Nov. 17, with the election of officers and final adoption of policies for the organization.

## Year's Last Southeast Pasture Walk Set

CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — The last southeast Pennsylvania pasture walk for the 1993 grazing season will be at Brian and Brenda Moyer's farm in Montgomery County on November 18 at 9:30 a.m.

This walk will feature late fall and early winter grazing. A no-till seeding of turnips into tall fescue will be grazed on the farm.

The late July seeding looks excellent. Brian and Brenda Moyer are experienced graziers working with 36 cows. The 25 Holsteins and nine Jerseys have a com-

bined herd average of 17,000 pound of milk.

During the grazing season, the herd receives little stored feed.

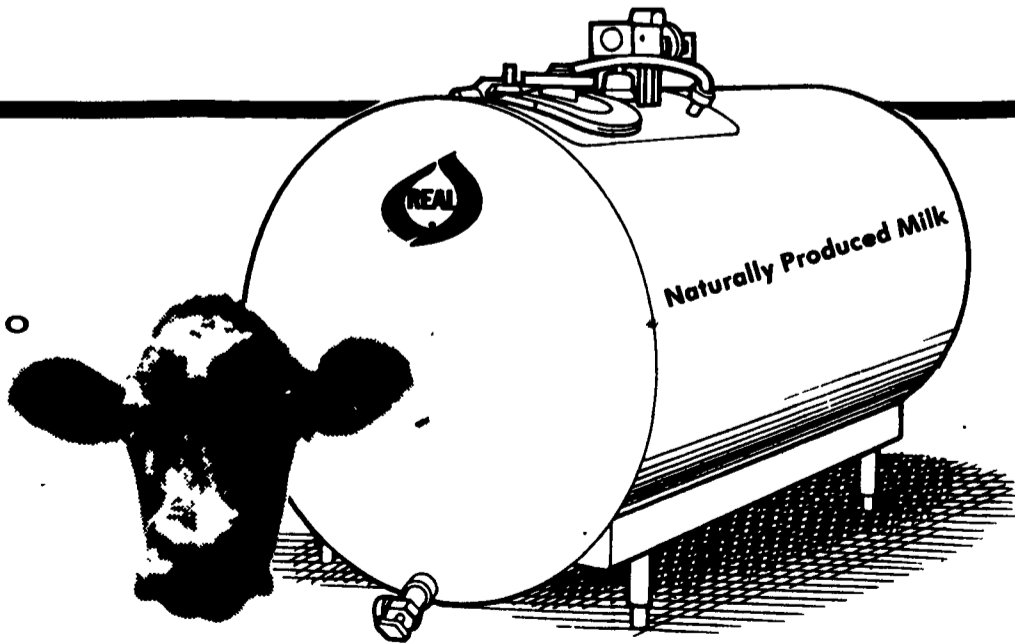
Following the walk, a slide show will be presented on successful grazing throughout Pennsylvania. The Moyer's farm is located close to the village of Elroy on Allentown Rd. between Rt. 113 and Rt. 63.

For more information about the walk and directions to the Moyer's farm, contact Tim Fritz in Montgomery County at (215) 489-4315.

Table 1: Cow Turnover Summary

	NUMBER OF COWS	AVERAGE AGE	YEARLY SUMMARY OF COWS ENTERING AND LEAVING THE HERD											
			COWS ENTERING HERD		COWS LEFT HERD		NUMBER OF COWS LEAVING THE HERD							
			NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	DAIRY	LOW PROD.	REPO	DISEASE INJURY	DIED	MAST. OR UDDER	FEET & LEGS	
1ST LACT.	21	2.0	6	21	35	6	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2ND LACT	15	4	7	1	2	4	7		1	1	1		1	
3 + LACTS	24	6	11	2	3	11	18		1	3	3	1	2	1
ALL LACTATIONS	60		24	24	40	21	35	1	3	5	5	1	4	2

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