

Intensive Grazing Can Boost Profits

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania dairy farmers can significantly increase profits through intensive rotational grazing, says an extension specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

In intensive rotational grazing, a pasture is fenced into small sections. The dairy herd grazes one section until it no longer gets an adequate amount of high-quality forage, then moves to the next section.

"Intensive rotational grazing increases usable pasture and cuts feed costs," says Dr. Steve Ford, assistant professor of agricultural economics. "Many Pennsylvania farmers already use intensive grazing as a major source of forage. Studies indicate that using pasture can increase returns per cow between \$85 and \$168 each year.

"The increase results from lowered feed costs, so it depends on commodity prices, production costs, and the technology used on the farm," Ford says. "An average increase of about \$125 per cow is a conservative estimate. A 60-cow dairy would see increased profits of about \$7,500 under these assumptions."

Milk production per cow sometimes declines when cows are put on pasture, but farmers can come out ahead even if it does. "With savings of \$125 per cow, farmers can afford to let milk production fall about 1,000 pounds per cow per year at current milk prices and still be as well off financially," Ford says. "To maximize profits, producers should use supplemental feeding to maintain high production."

Rotational grazing systems require additional time and skills, but farmers can spend less time on other forage crop tasks. "Using pasture cuts the need for stored forage," says Ford. "Also, less labor is needed to feed cows and do barn chores. A recent study in Vermont indicated a 50- to 60-cow herd requires 2.5 hours less labor per day on pasture. That labor can be used to better manage cows, youngstock or the farm's crop program."

The potential for increased profits from intensive grazing has its limits, Ford cautions, and pasture will not be appropriate for all farm situations. "Intensive grazing isn't a cure-all, but it can make some farmers money," he says. "Like any management alternative, farmers should carefully evaluate intensively grazed pasture before trying it."

Ford recently surveyed 1,200 Pennsylvania dairy farmers about aspects of their businesses, including feeding practices. "More than 29 percent say they use pasture as their primary forage source during the pasture season," he says. "About 16 percent use a rotational grazing system."

"Farmers in Pennsylvania's western and northern regions make the most use of pasture," Ford says. "In these areas, more than 40 percent use it as primary forage during pasture season and more than 20 percent use intensive grazing. But in southeastern Pennsylvania, less than 20 percent use pasture as primary forage and roughly 8 percent use intensive grazing."

The survey results suggest that pasture use will rise in the future.

"More than 18 percent said they intend to increase pasture use within the next five years."

Renewed interest in pasture stems mainly from economics.

"Recent decreases in profit margins have forced dairy farmers to examine alternative production systems," says Ford. "And

research has shown that intensively managed pasture can significantly reduce feed costs and other expenses during the grazing season."

Sire Power Acquires Bulls

TUNKHANNOCK (Wyoming Co.) — Seven young Holstein bulls bred in Pennsylvania have been acquired by Sire Power, Inc. for the cooperative's Gold sire development program.

Caernarvon SILVESTER-ET 2231658, sired by Singing-Brook N-B Mascot-ET *TL was bred by Andrew D. Stoltzfus of Morgantown, Pennsylvania. His dam, Caernarvon Star Shana-ET, sired by To-Mar Blackstar-ET *TL, is classified VG-86. She has PTA's of +2543M, +97F, +74P, and +\$308. She has a record at 2-2 in 305 days of 24,390m, 3.6%, 868f, 3.1% 761p.

Afton-Springs HANNIBAL-ET 2216915, sired by BCHNC Mark Malachi *TL was bred by Afton Spring Farm, of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. His dam, Art-Acres Cleitus May 88, sired by Bis-May Tradition Cleitus *TL, is classified VG-87. She has PTA's of +1983M, +104F, +74P, and +\$287. She has a record at 3-6 in 305 days of 23,960m, 4.7%, 1119f, 3.4% 805p.

Black-Pond Tesk AMTRAK-ET 2227054, sired by Tesk-Holm Valiant Rockie *TL was bred by Black Pond Farms of Saegertown,

Pennsylvania. His dam, Black-Pond Bell Admire, sired by Carlin-M Ivanhoe Bell *BL, is classified VG-87. She has PTA's of +1922M, +71F, 67P, and +\$247. She has a record at 3-2 in 305 days of 24,257m, 4.1%, 986f, 3.1% 763p.

Brooks-Twain LAINER-ET 2226368, sired by Ronnybrook Prelude-ET was bred by Walter E. Brooks of Springville, Pennsylvania. His dam, Brooks-Twain Ned Boy Lucy-ET, sired by Whittier-Farms Ned Boy *TL, is classified VG-85. She has PTA's of +1752M, +70F, +62P, and +\$222. She has a record at 3-3 in 305 days of 22,610m, 3.8%, 865f, 3.5% 785p.

Misty-Crest Choice SARGE-ET 2228061, sired by The Choice of Mark Adam-ET *TL was bred by Dave & Dennis Hottenstein of New Albany, Pennsylvania. His dam, Misty-Crest Ned Boy Sandy, sired by Whittier-Farms Ned Boy *TL, is classified VG-86. She has PTA's of +1667M, +54F, +66P, and +\$220. She has a record at 3-10 in 262 days of 29,560m, 3.3%, 976f, 3.5% 1045p.

Peachey-Elusive CALIBER-ET

2217808, sired by Elusive Rotate Duke-ET *TL was bred by Timothy R. Peachey of Petersburg, Pennsylvania. His dam, Peachey Ned Boy Carla, sired by Whittier-Farms Ned Boy *TL, is classified VG-86. She has PTA's of +1530M, +47F, +65P and +\$206. She has a record at 3-1 in 305 days of 26,725m, 3.3%, 876f, 3.4%, 900p.

Mr. Mi-Dream Reid NEON-ET 2225468, sired by Loganway Rodenes Reid *RC *TL was bred by Michael Swartley & Clair & Pat Thrush of Ulster, Pennsylvania. His dam, Wildmead Oscar Nina Santa, sired by Art-Acres Ned Boy Oscar-ET *TL, is classified VG-85. She has PTA's of +1936M, +63F, +66P, and +\$240. She has a record at 2-11 in 305 days of 25,150m, 3.8%, 968f, 3.4%, 857p.

Approved Gold herds with daughters from these bulls qualify for the incentives listed in Sire Power's Gold Sire Brochure. For further information on the Gold sire development program, contact your Sire Power representative, or the sire department at Sire Power Headquarters, Tunkhannock, (717) 836-3168.

Farming Requires Self-Analysis

(Continued from Page D3)

Enter these changes in the change column of the worksheet. Add them to your current yr-to-date totals on the left side of the worksheet to get the yr-to-date totals on the right side of the sheet. Then, recalculate your costs and returns per cwt. of milk.

Most of the figures on the left side of the work sheet are 1991 averages for about 1,000 Penna. dairy farms. In a few cases where data was missing, some estimates and assumptions were made.

The figures assume an average herd size of 69 cows plus 55 heifers which calve at 27 months of age. Cow turnover rate is about 36 percent, which means 25 replacements are needed per year.

These figures are offered as an example and as a basis for com-

parison. Enter figures from your own farm to see how well you are doing.

The categories of costs at the bottom of the worksheet can be quite revealing and surprising. For example, total feed-related costs can be quite different from purchased feed costs, and from your DHIA feed costs, because it includes the cost of feeding dry cows and heifers plus all crop-related costs.

You can calculate these categorized costs by adding the lines indicated in parentheses. Keep in mind costs shown in one category may overlap with those in other categories. These categorizations of costs are meant to help reveal clearly some of the major costs associated with dairying and milk production.

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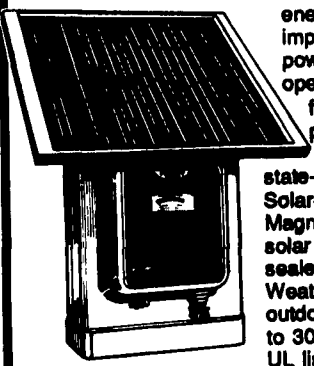
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