

Grazing Gazette



PENN STATE
College of Agricultural Sciences
in cooperation with USDA/ARS

THE GRASS IS GREEN!
by Lisa Holden, Assistant Professor Dairy & Animal Science and Tim Fritz, Montgomery Co. Agent

Spring has sprung, and it's time (or past time) to start grazing.

Since forage management and feeding management are tightly linked, this article will focus on both plants and animals.

Spring is often the most challenging time for grazing management. To quote a New Zealand phrase, "the difference between an above-average farmer and an average farmer is about two weeks." So, as we begin this grazing season, let's take a walk down that lane with the animals and think about a few things.

The Pasture: Cool season grasses and clover are either already actively growing or are on the starting blocks ready to kick in gear. Early spring management should focus on attempting to "stage in paddocks." The heavier you rely on pasture as your forage system, the earlier you should start.

Some graziers start shortly after green up. If you are not started by 3 inches growth, you will most likely get way behind the grass. Start on southern slopes, early species paddocks such as ryegrass, bluegrass, and orchardgrass, and possibly wet areas (if "dry" at time of grazing). These areas usually start growing first. If your farm is

relatively uniform, then spring management and getting cows out early is even more important because the whole system starts growing at once. (Fall management also influences time of green up and can be used as a tool to bring the pasture in different stages.)

When weather conditions are right soon after green up, an explosion of grass occurs which is almost impossible to manage. Your cows should already be transitioned to a pasture ration at this point to maximize pasture intake during this rapid growth period. Don't be caught with your fences down! If and when the pasture gets ahead of you, keep the grass vegetative by moving the cows very fast and/or harvesting unneeded paddocks early. The earlier unneeded paddocks are harvested the earlier they can be returned to the pasture system. Production is reduced dramatically by allowing the grasses to go to head. (Exemption: Smooth Bromegrass and Timothy should not be grazed during stem elongation and should be harvested after flowering.)

Other factors to consider:

Wet weather: If field conditions are wet, graze well drained paddocks with established sod if possible. Put the animals on only long enough to graze then pull them off to either a barn, concrete area or a "clean" sacrifice area. Do not destroy pasture under poor

weather conditions unless this is your goal. Remember, your pasture will hopefully be producing high quality forages for the next 6 to 9 months.

Nitrogen: In most cases avoid applying nitrogen during green up. If you use commercial nitrogen (most producers rely on legumes to provide nitrogen), apply after the main flush—usually in mid to late spring. If nitrogen is applied during green up, the flush will be even harder to manage.

The Animals: Fresh, new forage is highly palatable and animals will readily consume spring pasture. The key to transition feeding in the early spring season is observing and adjusting for changes in pasture growth. As with any feeding changes, more gradual adaptation to new feedstuffs will help the rumen microbes to positively adjust. Changes in pasture growth (and availability) can be observed visually in the paddocks as well as by changes in refusals at the bunk. Maintaining a high dry matter intake should always be your first goal, so keep enough high quality feed (TMR, stored forages, etc.) available especially when beginning to graze. Remember that cattle do not graze as closely to the ground as sheep, so what may look like an abundance of green growth to you may be unavailable to the cow. Adequate feed available in the barn also helps to minimize the risk of bloat, especially with legume pastures. Hungry cows on short pasture means sacrificing production, and hungry cows (not adapted to pasture) means a high risk of problems with bloat. So, it is not wise to turn out hungry cows in early spring.

As the animals' pasture dry matter intake increases, the amount of stored feed that is refused will increase somewhat proportionally.

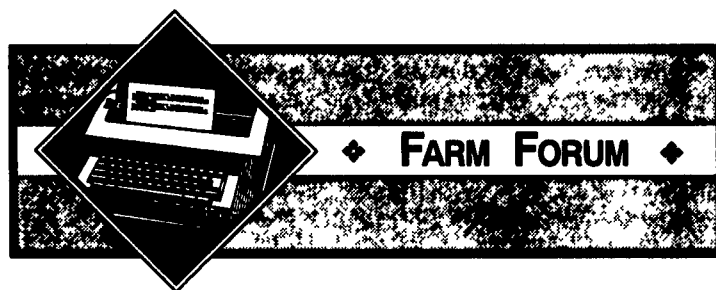
For every pound of dry matter refused from TMR or high quality forage, the cow is eating about a pound of dry matter from pasture or about 5-7 pounds of wet material. Spring pasture is about 15-20 percent dry matter and is generally higher in protein and energy and lower in fiber than most stored forages. Plan ahead by working with

your nutritionist to decide how often your rations will need to be adjusted. It is best to avoid very frequent ration changes, as they can upset the rumen environment. However, a decline in milk production is easy to avoid by balancing a new ration ahead of time based on estimated changes in pasture intake, rather than making "off the cuff" feed changes.

Two other nutritional concerns with spring pasture are low fiber contents, which can lead to very low fat tests and an unhealthy rumen, and low magnesium content of spring grass pastures which can lead to grass tetany. Adequate forage particle length in the silages and/or feeding a few pounds of long hay can help provide the animals with adequate amounts of effective fiber in spring pasture

While fibrous concentrates may be beneficial as well, even fibrous concentrates lack the effective fiber that forages provide. Finally, although grass tetany seems to be a minor problem, cool growing temperatures coupled with certain soil fertility can mean that animals grazing all grass pastures are at risk for developing grass tetany. Supplementing adequate amounts of magnesium in the grain mix will prevent grass tetany. Pastures with mixtures of grass and legume are also helpful.

Spring can be a very challenging time, especially for new graziers. It takes some intensive management of both the plants and the animals to navigate the rough spots, reach your goals, and get a great start grazing those pastures!



(Continued from Page A10)

Search For New Centre County Dairy Princess Begins

As the end of my reign as the Centre County Dairy Princess nears, the pursuit for a replacement begins. The experience of representing Centre County has been rewarding in many ways. The learning experience itself, has been worthwhile for my future because of all the public speaking practice I had. This has enabled me to become a better individual because I developed a higher confidence level in myself. The fears I had going into becoming a dairy princess, like speaking in front of people, have all but diminished over time.

In the future, I will look back at being a Dairy Princess as one of the most rewarding experiences I had while living in Centre County.

The chance to represent an industry that I take pride in, has given me a whole new perspective on what we, as dairy farmers, must do in order to promote the dairy industry. Not only must we provide a wholesome product but we must also be able to meet the consumers' needs. These things were experienced firsthand while dealing with consumers while doing promotions. The experiences possible with becoming a dairy princess are endless.

In closing, anyone interested in experiencing the chance to represent Centre County can attend the princess tea on April 12, 1995 at my residence. Any inquiring minds can contact me, Rachel Tanis, at (814) 364-2123.

Rachel Tanis
Pa. Alternate Dairy Princess

FREE Dirt Killer Nozzle
with pressure washer purchase thru April

3000 PSI 11 HP PRESSURE WASHER

- 11 HP Honda engine
- 4 Gallon per minute 3000 PSI pump
- Easy start unloader
- 40' Hose, gun & wand kit
- Ship Wt. 182 lbs

\$1098⁰⁰
(Includes 5 EXTRA NOZZLES)
(\$1149.00 Delivered)

2000 PSI 5.5 HP PRESSURE WASHER

- 5.5 HP Honda recoil start w/Oil Alert
- 3.0 GPM General Pump
- 30' hose, downstream soap injection
- Cart with 10" pneumatic tires
- Split Wand
- Ship Wt. 87 lbs.

\$799⁰⁰
(\$825.00 Delivered)

3500 PSI 13 HP PRESSURE WASHER

- 13 HP Honda with recoil start and Oil Alert
- 50' Hose
- 4.0 GPM Cat Pump
- Downstream soap injection
- Cart with 10" pneumatic tires

\$1,398⁵⁰
(\$1469.00 Delivered)
Includes 5 EXTRA NOZZLES

Models w/Cat Pump in Stock:
• 2000 PSI 5.5 HP Honda Engine #25
• 3000 PSI 13 HP Honda #127

KRANZLE DIRT KILLER NOZZLES

The world patented Dirt Killer, which features a rotating turbine, delivers the impact of a 0° nozzle with a 25° fan. This incredible performance will increase your efficiency while cutting your cleaning time in half, saving you money through reduced labor and material costs.

DK SERIES EXCLUSIVE FEATURES:

- Spins faster
- Used for cleaning
- No lines or steeking
- 3200 PSI
- 180° F

ONLY \$79⁰⁰
(plus \$3.50 shipping)

- Distributor for 1/2" to 10" Sch. 40 PVC Pipe & S & D Pipe
- Culvert Pipe from 8" to 24"
- Corrugated Pipe
- SDR 35 PVC 24" Pipe in Stock
- We Also Have A Large Inventory Of Fittings
- Bradford Water Heater & Cozy Propane Heater Sales, Service & Installation

Haylage Season Means Bunker Season Is Here!!!

Think Pre Cast!

Get The Advantages!

Moveable
RESALE VALUE

8'6" Height

Tongue & Grooved Joints Bolt Together



Think Quality

Think Sollenberger Silo

#1 in precast concrete!

Ask about Bunker Add. Discount!



Sollenberger Silos Corp.

A Nittanhouse Company
Box N Chambersburg, PA 17201

(717) 261-9500

Poured Concrete Silos Since 1908

For Precast Bunk Silos & Manure Systems

Ask For TABB JUSTUS
Evenings 717-762-8663

SPRING GARDEN PLUMBING & SUPPLY
339 Spring Garden Rd., Kinzers, PA 17535
717-442-9622 (Call 8:00-8:30 A.M.)
Sale In Effect Thru April 29, 1995

PA residents add 6% sales tax unless exempt.