

# 'Garnergrass' Management Leads To Improved Forage On Montrose Farm

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**MONTROSE (Susquehanna Co.)**

—For years, one Susquehanna County grazer called it "garnergrass," because it simply didn't fit the description of any common forage.

It wasn't well-known type of grass. It grew profusely and quickly. It endured drought. It was a "monoculture" and it worked, in a way, to feed the herd.

But Jim Garner, in whose honor the grass was named on his farm, was unhappy with the results. The feed quality was low in terms of protein and dry matter. The milking average of his dairy was low and needed improvement.

Then, along about 1990, Garner listened to the work of Sonny Golden, a dairy nutritionist from Springville. Garner said that Golden, a proponent of grazing for a long time, told him to fence off the entire farm and simply grow pasture.

So, the same year, Garner sold his baler and other harvesting equipment. He kept the rake, rotary mower, and manure spreader. He took a first cutting of the grass and baled it up.

Then he brought his dairy herd onto the intensive rotational pasture.

Those efforts paid off in a big way. By allowing the cows to harvest the "garnergrass," forage protein content improved to 20 percent from 12 percent. Dry matter intake went up. The milk average, already low, increased.

Now, Garner takes about 18,000 pounds of milk from the cows.

More importantly, gone are the headaches of mechanization, equipment repair, feed worries, and other matters.

Last month, Garner was recognized with the Outstanding Pasture Producer Award from the Pennsylvania Forage and Grazing Council at its awards ceremony in Grantville.

Garner, technician with the Susquehanna County Conservation District, has hosted numerous field days and tours of his farm.

He manages about 35 acres — all pasture. "Everything has a fence around it," he

said.

He raises about 70 head of all-registered Holstein. There are about 45 milking cows and the remainder are dry cows and young stock.

Garner began work on the dairy in 1980, when, he noted, "Kay and I purchased the farm." His father was a farm manager and, at the time, owned only

an old car. He essentially started farming from scratch — what few farmers can do anywhere these days.

Garner farms with wife Kay and two daughters, Melinda, 22 and Andrea, 18, and a son, Justin, 14. His two daughters are in college — Melinda is student teaching and Andrea is a dairy science major at Delaware Valley College. Justin is in the 9th grade.

Garner, who began grazing in 1989, switched to an intensive rotational grazing system in 1990. He began grazing on paddocks measuring 5-7 acres.

Back then, grazing was relegated to "steel wires and posts," with little flexibility, he noted. Now, the one-acre paddocks are rotated every 12 hours.

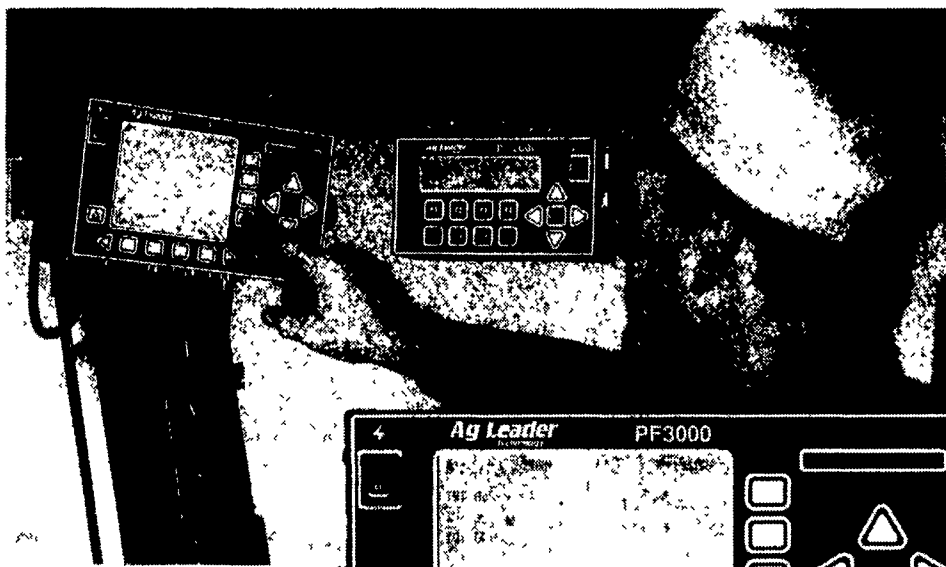
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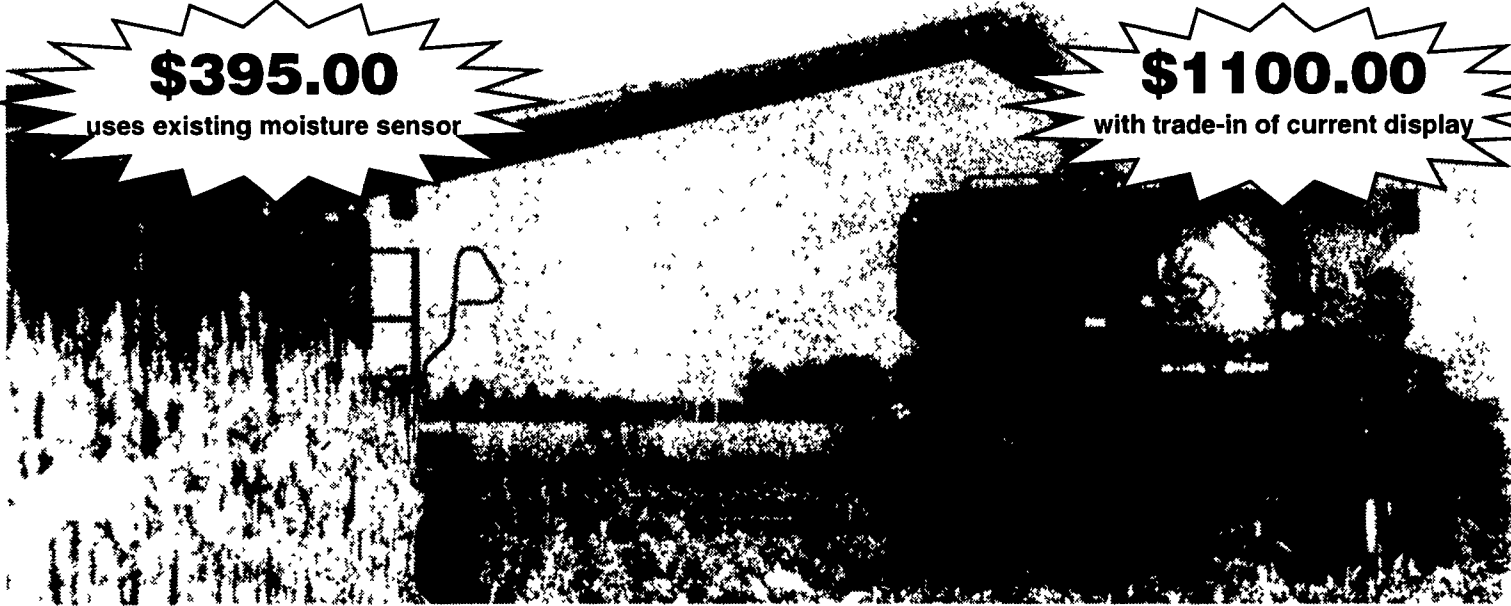


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