

**DAIRY FARM
MANAGEMENT
BASICS**

A Farm Management Course by
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Feeding the Lactating Cow - Article 14

Goal Get cows off to a good start early in lactation, and sustain good performance thru to dryoff time

- Maintain normal rumen function.
- Maximize DMI.

- Prevent excessive flesh loss, and then regain lost flesh quickly
- Prevent early lactation metabolic problems
- Encourage peak production and persistency of production.
- Maintain normal levels of milk components
- Get the cow to conceive.
- Prepare the cow for dry off.

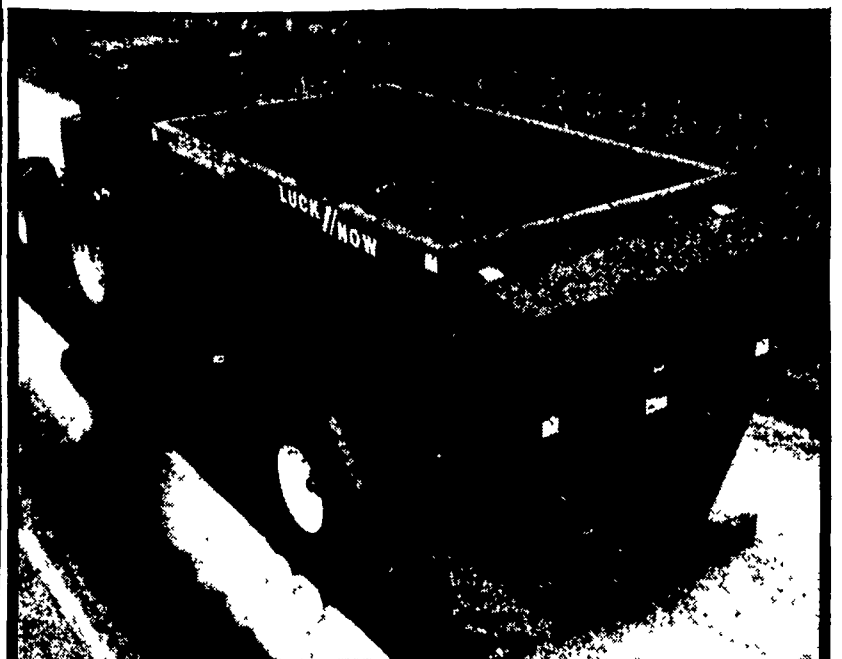
Some suggestions for helping cows accomplish these goals include

- 1 Get cows eating soon after calving.
 - Feed abundant amounts of good quality forage to cows soon after calving This will help maintain good rumen function, good DMI, and normal component levels in milk
 - After calving, as soon as their appetites pick up, gradually start feeding more grain and more of the milking ration, but always be sure the cows are eating good amounts of forage first Once they have met their minimum forage needs, then work on grain intakes, but be careful not to throw them off feed.
- 2 In early lactation, feed according to flesh condition, not according to milk production
 - Maximize DMI in an effort to reduce weight loss and to get cows back into good working flesh as soon as possible. Aim for a body condition score of about 2.5 to 3.0
 - This provides cows the energy base they need for good milk production and persistency of production, good conception and good long term health. Cows should peak higher That's important because every pound of peak milk equates to about 225 lb. more milk per lactation
 - Once cows have returned to good flesh, then you can feed them according to milk production
 - Milk production peaks about 2-3 months into lactation, and DMI doesn't peak until about 1 month later. See Figure 1. Consequently, cows will usually lose weight for about 3 to 4 months (see Figure 2). After that time, they may start getting back into a positive energy balance, start gaining weight, and then start to conceive.
- 3 Monitor weight loss by observing cows' body condition Figure 3 depicts desirable body condition changes and desirable scores throughout the lactation. The goals are

Have cows calve at a body score of about 3.5.

- Prevent cows from losing more than 1 body score after calving. If they lose too much flesh too fast they are apt to get ketosis

(Turn to Page A28)



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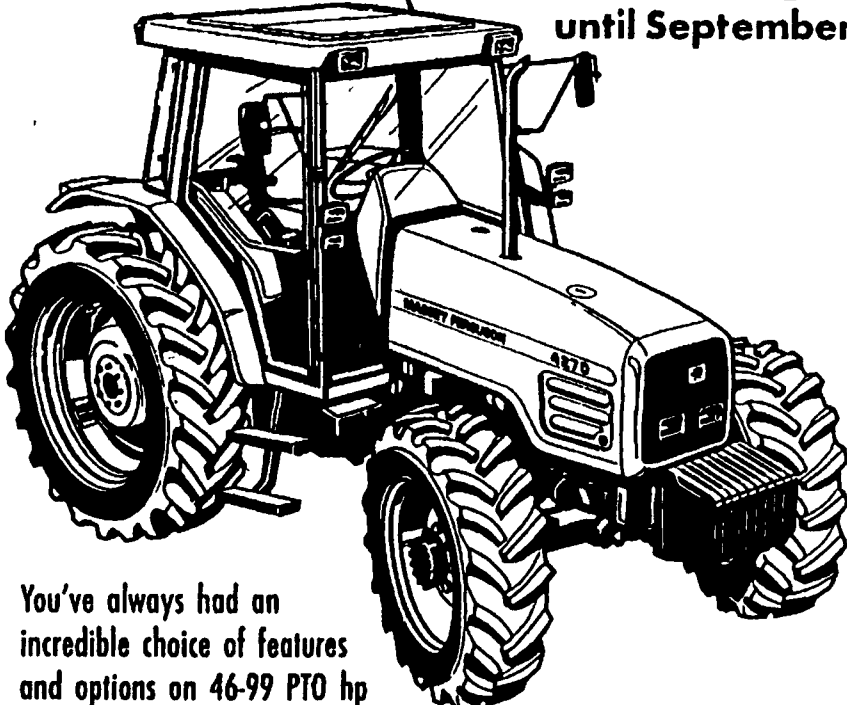
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