

PENNSSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences • Cooperative Extension

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IN THIS ISSUE:

What's Happening On PA Dairy Farms

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY FARMS?

A mail survey conducted in 1997 by Penn State obtained responses from 874 dairy farms from across Pennsylvania (60.8% return). The purpose of the survey was to provide updated information on dairy production practices, use of technology, level of satisfaction with certain aspects of the operation, and grazing practices. Some of the survey results will be published in future issues of *Udder News*. This month, information on grazing management practices will be summarized. These results apply only to the milking cows.

Did you graze milking cows in 1996? More than half (57.7%) of Pennsylvania dairy farmers said they grazed milking cows at some time during 1996 (Table 1) The results indicated that only 12.5% of the farmers moved their milking cows to an area of fresh grass at least every 3 days. On the other extreme, 30.2% percent of the farmers grazed their milk cows on the same pasture for more than 30 days or all season.

Table 1. Grazing rotation period for milk cows.

Rotation Period	Percent of All Farmers*
One Day or Less	7.3
2 to 3 Days	5.1
4 to 7 Days	5.4
8 to 14 Days	4.7
15 to 30 Days	4.7
More than 30 Days	4.2
Same Field All Season	26.0
Do Not Graze Milk Cows	42.3

*May not add to 100 due to rounding.

Two-thirds of farmers used pasture for less than 25% of forage needs.

Furthermore, only 18.3% of the farmers relied on pasture for more than 50% of the forage needs during periods of good forage availability. Two-thirds (67.4%) of the farmers relied on pasture for less than 25% of the forage for milking cows. This group includes the 42.3% who did not graze milking cows.

Over 30% of farmers who used pasture did not reduce stored forages fed to dairy cows. The data showed that of the farmers who grazed their cows, 23.3% reduced energy and 49% reduced protein during periods of good forage

(Turn to Page 17)



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