

What's Happening On PA Dairy Farms

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Table 1. Technology used on Pennsylvania Dairy Farms.

PERCENT OF FARMERS	NO. OF COWS	MILK PER COW	TECHNOLOGY
18.3	117.5	17,876	Milking parlor
56.5	61.8	17,974	Barn Pipeline
25.1	35.7	16,025	Milker Pails
16.2	122.9	18,817	Automatic Takeoffs
35.0	95.6	19,143	Total Mixed Rations (TMR)
53.8	72.2	18,726	DHIA
18.1	97.2	21,144	bST on Some Cows
22.1	94.9	18,440	Personal Computer
25.5	73.5	17,795	Written Farm Plans

Survey Average:
65.3 17,476

One third (35%) of the state's dairy farms use a TMR. However, these herds average 95 cows per herd, representing more than half of the state's dairy cows. Eighteen percent of the herds have used bovine somatotrophin (bST) on some of their dairy cows. These herds averaged over 97 cows per farm and more than 20,000 pounds of milk per cow. Over half (53.6%) of the farms use DHIA. These herds tended to be larger and sold more milk per cow than the survey average.

Twenty-two percent of the farmers indicated they used a computer on their farm. Those farms with computers averaged nearly 95 cows per farm and produced almost 1000 pounds more milk per cow than the average herd. Written farm plans or goals are used on 25.5 % of the farms. These farms

tended to be larger than average but had average milk production.

Summary: Many of the technologies examined in the survey are related to herd size and milk sold per cow. The most common technologies used on Pennsylvania dairy farms are barn pipeline milking systems and DHIA. Milking parlors, computers, bST, and automatic takeoffs are used on 25% or less of the state's dairy farms but these farms are the larger herds, produce more milk per cow, and include a over 40% of the state's dairy cows. There is little difference in milk production between farms using a milking parlor and farms using a barn pipeline. The majority of the state's dairy farms are characterized by smaller herds milked with vacuum milker pails or barn pipeline milking systems and employ few other production technologies. The use of individual technologies does not necessarily infer greater profitability. However, larger herds are successfully employing technology to increase milk production and capture economies of scale. If smaller herd owners are to survive they must be able to decide which technologies and management practices are best suited to increase profits on their individual farm.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY FARMS? PART III

This month information is presented on the dairy and cropping characteristics of Pennsylvania dairy farms. This is the third set of results from a 1997 mail survey of Pennsylvania dairy producers by

the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. The survey was mailed to a random selection of farms and the results were representative of the state's dairy farms based on known county distributions. Each farm was asked several questions regarding herd size, milk production per cow, and acres farmed. The survey results indicate that smaller dairy herds on relative small acreage continues to represent the majority of Pennsylvania's dairy industry. This point is specifically noted by examining median instead of average values.

The farmers reported owning an average of 65.3 cows (Table 1). However, the median herds size was only 52 cows per farm, indicating that half of the state's herds have 52 cows or less. In fact, 44.6% of the state's herds have fewer than 50 cows and 25.4% have less than 40 cows. Herds with 80 cows or more account for 23.1% of the state's herds. Please remember while there are numerous smaller dairy farms, the greatest concentration of cows and therefore total milk production is on the larger farms.

Table 1. Number of cows per farm in Pennsylvania (1997).

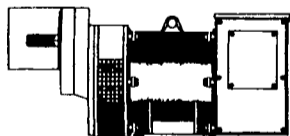
Number of Milking Cows	Percent
<30	10.4
30-39	15.0
40-49	19.2
50-59	14.6
60-79	17.7
80-99	8.9
>100	14.1

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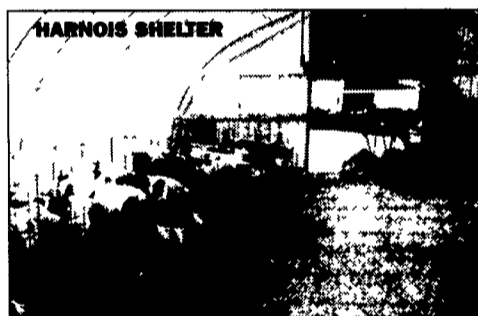
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