

Beginning Grazer's School Focuses On Grass Selection, Herd Health

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tended from all over the country, including West Virginia, Indiana, Tennessee, New York, and states in the Northeast. Petrucci urged those who attended to "consider adapting a grazing-based system as an alternative to high-capital farming," he said at the start of the school.

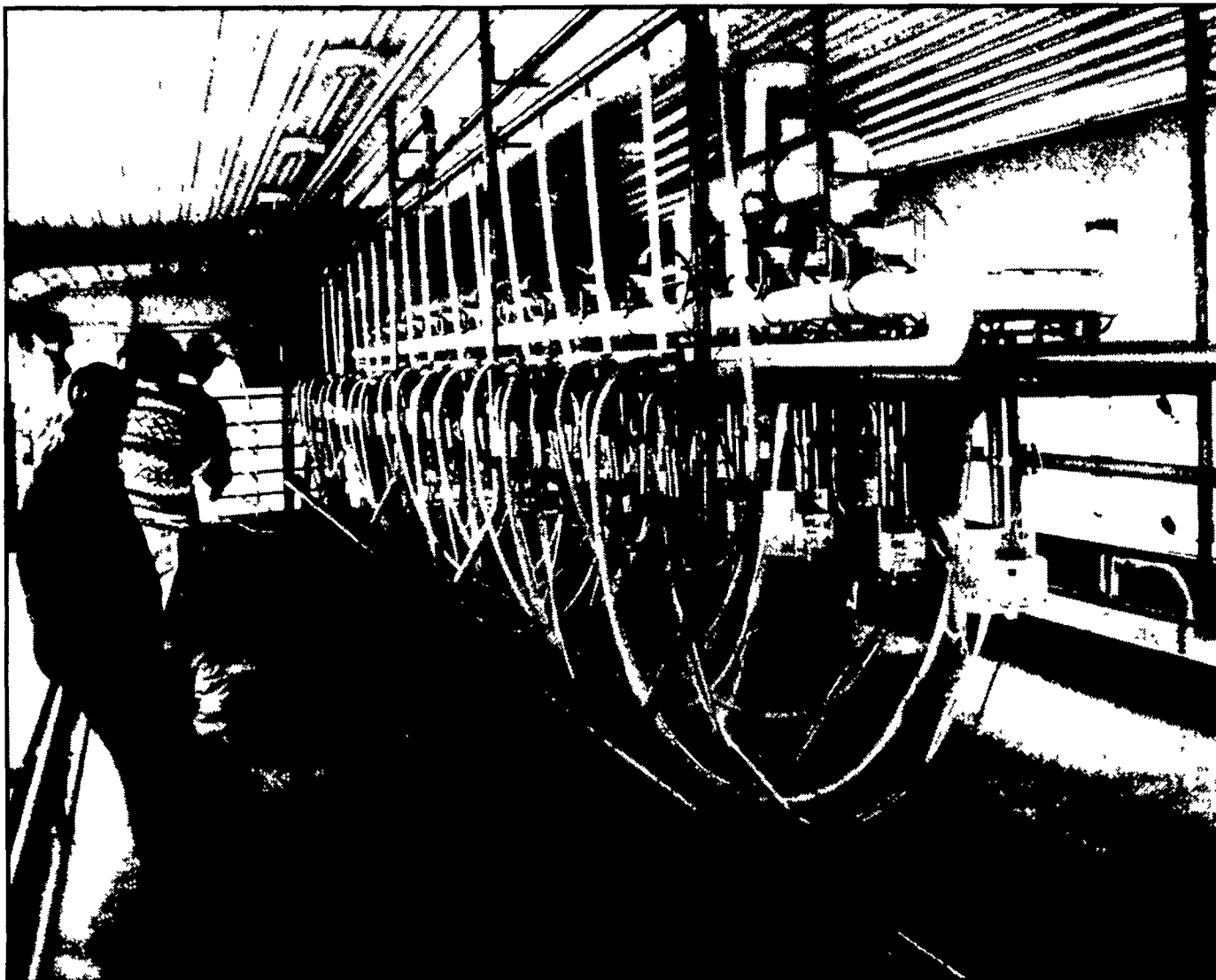
AFT, based in Washington, D.C., owns the grazing-based dairy, bequeathed to the AFT in 1996 by the estate of Anthony and Anya Smith, Sylvan. The farm was a dairy years ago when it switched to primarily a hay-production operation. In late 1997, the farm brought in the "first animals on the farm in 30 years," Petrucci said.

The AFT farm uses a concrete feed pad measuring 100 feet long by 22 feet wide, with an additional area measuring 65 feet by 12 feet. The area can accommodate 108 cows with two feet of room per cow, Moyer noted. The pad can accommodate up to about 130 cows.

Manure from the pad is scraped into a concrete holding basin, measuring 40 feet long by 24 feet wide at eight foot deep, enough storage for about 60 days, Petrucci said. A pump removes the liquid manure, which is field-applied. Similar to New Zealand-type storage systems, a challenge is coming up with a way in the future to separate the solids.

The seasonal dairy uses a sliding panel, open-sided milking parlor. The holding area uses a custom-made electrified crowd gate.

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Milk is moved to a 1,500-gallon tank. Moyer sells milk to the Maryland-Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative.



Thirty-two cows can be milked at a time, Moyer, right, noted. It takes about 50 minutes to milk 107 cows. The total cost of the Grade A sliding door parlor system, including the feed pad, manure management system, equipment, and parlor was \$213,000, Moyer said.



In October, Bryan T. Petrucci, director of farms division for AFT, center, introduced the graziers who attended from all over the country, including West Virginia, Indiana, Tennessee, New York, and states in the Northeast.



This stream fencing system can be moved so cows can graze as near to the creek as the producer chooses. Moyer inspects the system.