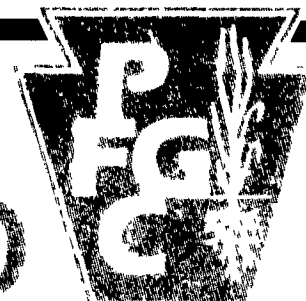




Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council



# FORAGING AROUND

'Industry, Farmer, Scientist — Working Together Toward A Sounder Grassland Program'



## Want Good Alfalfa? Watch The Soil pH



You won't often see a scene such as this. Joe Weimer holds a plant showing deep root growth—the alfalfa was finally able to locate some moisture during the 1999 drought. By coincidence, a cave-in found near a county road revealed a natural underground water course next to Joe Weimer's alfalfa crop. Photo by Gay Brownlee

GAY BROWNLEE  
Somerset Co. Correspondent

SOMERSET (Somerset Co.) — When it comes to his alfalfa, crop farmer Joe Weimer of Somerset said nothing is more critical than maintaining a pH balance of 6.5 to 7.

"The main thing is to keep an eye on the pH," Weimer said.

Weimer usually sends a test to Penn State or to the University of Virginia. On old plantings, he runs a soil sample about every third or fourth year. However, with new seedings, it is critical to run a soil sample right away. In two or three weeks the results will come back.

If the indicators show the soil pH is low lime it.

"Usually, good alfalfa would take 1,000 pounds to a ton a year,"

Weimer said. "I have a lime spreader, so I spread it myself."

Weimer prefers using hydrated lime because it goes to work the same season, which is pretty fast. Weimer said the lime application will last 4 to 5 years.

"I like to get six to seven years out of seed," Weimer said. "When the alfalfa comes out, I go into two years of corn before I go back into alfalfa."

The rotation works out well and allows some 12 to 20 acres of new alfalfa seedings to go in every year.

The fundamental thing about alfalfa is to avoid wet spots, cautioned Weimer. Right now, his own acreage has one vulnerable area where a wet spot is troublesome.

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## Producers Use CLA, Mini-Dairies To Move Milk

ANDY ANDREWS  
Lancaster Farming Staff

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.) — Milk is the original "nutraceutical" or nutrient-pharmaceutical that can protect the human body, science has proven.

Simply put, milk harbors conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a fatty acid present in milk that can fight certain types of cancer. Milk contains about 4-6 milligrams of CLA per gram of fat (cheese, too).

And pasture scientists are showing that cows fed high amounts of forages, including those from pasture, can increase CLA in milk by 2-3 percent, noted Larry Muller, Penn State dairy scientist, at last month's Pennsylvania Grazing and Forage Conference at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

Muller spoke on a session focusing on value-added dairy markets.

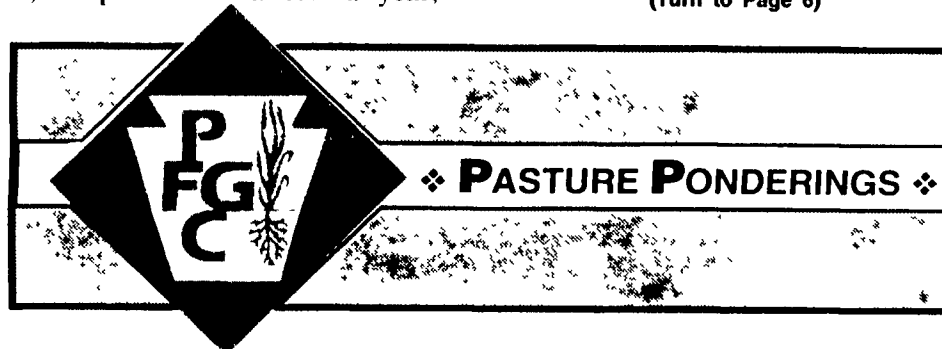
These days, dairy farmers are struggling with volatile prices, increased input costs, decreasing margins, and they receive a smaller percentage of the retail price. Beverage consumption, particularly soft drinks, is on the rise.

More than ever, farmers must consider the end users of the products. And those end users — consumers — are looking for the "pharma" foods that can add to a healthy lifestyle.

CLAs are found in unsaturated fat. Already dairy science (through a Penn State pilot project) has found that, through management of nutrients to the cow, the proportion of the saturated, or bad fat, can be decreased, and unsaturated fat increased.

In the future, CLA amounts could potentially be more carefully controlled. The same CLAs have

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DUANE E. PYSHER  
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I have recently been involved with helping to conduct several grazing schools in the Harrisburg area. As I was conducting some classroom discussions on several agronomic topics, it became evident to me that even though several of the subjects were designed for beginning grazers, they were points that many experienced graziers may need to revisit. I will address several of those topics in this column.

When dealing with agronomic principles of grazing, we need to think about the basic unit of production — the tiller or individual plant. When we have a population of tillers, they are called a sward. It is the number and size of tillers in a sward that makes up the total yield of dry matter, either as hay, silage, or pasture. We need to make sure that we care for these fillers by providing a proper growing environment with all the essential nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium, in a soil with the optimum pH level. We also need to provide the tiller with proper management and that basically in-

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PFGC directors, from left, John Pergosky, Ed Rits, Dick Hann, Matt Sanderson, Duane Pysher, Marvin Hall, Craig Williams, Ed Koncle, and Richard Adams. See conference awards story page 12. Photo by Andy Andrews



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