

EAAP

Low Cost Grazing Systems in the Mid West USA
Affecting Udder Health, Reproduction and Longevity
in Cattle

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Grazing dairy cattle has shown great economic, environmental and animal benefits

- However



You have to think
outside the
freestall!

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US: Midwest Region



United States Department of Agriculture Statistics 2013

| | Herds | Number of Cows |
|----------------|--------|----------------|
| US Dairy Herds | 46,960 | 9,221,000 |
| Wisconsin | 10,880 | 1,271,000 |
| Minnesota | 3,895 | 484,000 |
| Iowa | 1,425 | 208,000 |

Grazing Overview in Wisconsin

- Average Herd size in Wisconsin 116 cows
- Average Herd size in USA 198 Cows
- Largest Grazing Herd in Wisconsin 1800 cows
- 25% of the Herds in Wisconsin are self reported graziers (2,720 out of 10,880)



Grazing Has Great Potential For Promoting Animal Welfare

- Increases cows ability to express natural behavior
- Interact within the herd as a social animal
- Increased opportunities for play



Milk them Fast Get them back on Grass

- Reduced time around things that will hurt them, Concrete, manure and urine in a slurry, and walls and corrals
- Opportunity to feed supplement is greater
- Manure and urine distribution is better if cattle do not linger near milking barn or in lanes

Typical Retrofitted Parlor



Reduced Risk of Mastitis

- Moving cows on a daily basis may result in a cleaner bedding environment
- Larger eating and resting spaces than confinement can reduce physical teat injury

SCC and Standard Plate Count

- SCC and Standard plate count was not statistically different in the Ruegg et al. study comparing 192 organic farms, 64 conventional non grazing farms and 36 conventional grazing farms.
- Surveyed farmers perceived a lower labor requirement on grazed cows. (cleaner udders, less prep required etc.)

SCC during Out Wintering

- 22 years of data on 2 farms
- Average Herd size 165
- Average SCC = 170
- Case study indicating that this is possible





Longevity of Grazing Cattle

- The average number of lactation of animals on Grazing farms (Organic and Conventional) was 2.6 lactations, which was greater than that on Conventional Non Grazing farms (2.3 lactations).

Reduced Risk of Hoof Problems

- Pastured cattle tend to have a reduced risk of both hoof diseases (foot rot in particular) and hoof distress
- A survey of hoof trimmers indicated that grazing herds require less hoof maintenance

Governmental Involvement of Dairy Grazing

- No direct payments
- Soil conservation and water quality are considered a by product of Grazing and have good support

Grazing Problems that must be addressed

- Heat stress in pasture situation
- Parasite management from both the pasture and wildlife

High Tech Method to Reduce Heat Stress



Conclusions

- Grazing is perceived to be a net positive to dairy cattle by both dairy farmers and the general public.
- Both research and case study work points to the practice of grazing as being at the least no worst then confinement dairy production in promoting udder health, longevity and reproduction and at the best managed farms markedly better.



That's all
Folks