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Managing the high-producing herd. III. Producing high quality milk

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Managing the high-producing herd. III. Producing high quality milk

Abstract

Progress in the dairy industry over the past 30 yr can be defined as a movement toward fewer farms, more cows per farm, fewer total cows, more milk per cow, a gradual decline in total annual milk production from 1950 through 1975 followed by a sharp increase through 1985, a decrease in per capita consumption, and an increase in milk quality.; Dairy Day, 1988, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, 1988;

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MANAGING THE HIGH-PRODUCING HERD. III. PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY MILK.

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Progress in the dairy industry over the past 30 yr can be defined as a movement toward fewer farms, more cows per farm, fewer total cows, more milk per cow, a gradual decline in total annual milk production from 1950 through 1975 followed by a sharp increase through 1985, a decrease in per capita consumption, and an increase in milk quality.

In 1950, 3,648,000 farms reported milk cows, whereas in 1985, the number of farms reporting milk cows had declined to 273,620. The average herd size increased from 5.8 cows in 1950 to 40.3 cows in 1985. During this same period, annual milk production per cow increased from 5,302 lb (1950) to 13,016 lb (1985). Per capita consumption of fluid milk and milk products declined from 740 lb milk equivalent in 1950 to 540 lb in 1975. Per capita consumption of milk was relatively constant from 1975 to 1981, then increased sharply from 542 to 582 lb between 1981 and 1985. This increase in per capita consumption corresponded with increased USDA donations and increased promotion of dairy products by producers.

Competition for fluid intake capacity of consumers is a never ending challenge. The dairy industry has lost ground over the past 20 yr to everything except coffee, fruit juices, whiskey, and water. Per capita consumption of fluid milk in 1965 was estimated to be 26.0 gallons, but by 1986 it had decreased to 20.3 gallons. Comparable figures for soft drinks show an increase from 17.8 gallons (1965) to 42.1 gallons (1986); beer intake increased from 15.9 to 23.9 gallons. Water consumption dropped from 72.4 gallons in 1965 to 41.2 gallons in 1986, whereas the intake of coffee decreased from 37.8 to 25.4 gallons. Consumer intake of fruit juices and distilled spirits remained relatively constant during this period. Consumption of fluids does not appear to be totally price-related because the current price of milk in Manhattan, Kansas is $1.79 per gallon, soft drinks (sale price) are $2.06 per gallon, premium beer is $6.83 per gallon, and tap water is essentially free.

The present marketing program effectively promotes the nutritional value of dairy products and relates milk with good health. Advertising creates a product image and, therefore, has a positive long-term effect on sales only if the product lives up to the image. Our challenge at the farm level is to ensure that milk leaves the farm free of antibiotics, low in bacteria and somatic cells, and free of off-flavored components.

Offering only high quality milk for sale is the only effective way to support the advertisements your dollars purchase. The 1988 Dairy Day program addresses some of the concerns consumers have about milk quality and offers guidelines useful to the producer of high quality milk.