



IS THE PASTURE ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE?

Soon the grass will be turning green, trees will be budding, and the cows will be pushing the fence over to get to the lush grass on the other side. It's always a treat to see grazing dairy cows when driving around the county. I like to say pasture cows are happy cows! But, how many producers can honestly say they manage pastures to their fullest potential? Virginia has very few pasture-based dairies. The large majority of farms utilize pasture as a means to reduce stored forage demand during the spring and summer months, when quantity is becoming low. Management of the correct forage or mixture of forages is ultimately the foundation to a successful pasture-based dairy or one trying to stretch stored forages until after the new harvest. The successful farmer understands the working relationship between pasture forage quality, yield, and milk production. Research has shown that almost any typical forage, if managed correctly, can become dairy-quality feed. Certain forages contain more energy and protein over others, but if used and managed correctly all can become milk producing feeds.

Recently, Dr. Robert Fry from St. Brigid's Dairy in Maryland and Dr. Chris Teutsch from Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center spoke at the [Virginia State Feed Association Convention and Nutritional Management "Cow College"](#) about managing the grazing dairy herd and forages for drought prone conditions. Both stressed the importance of covering the entire grazing season with legumes and forages to provide optimal energy and protein. With any forage or legume there are periods of high and low growth. Planting mixtures

that cover the highs and lows will allow the pasture to remain greener and fuller longer.

Which mixtures should be planted and grazed depends upon several underlying aspects: forage quality, soil environment, hardiness, drought tolerance, and ultimately management. Forage quality is best when kept in a vegetative stage and this is dependent on the species planted. Most cool-season grasses may be grazed at 6 to 8 inches high, where tall warm-season grasses should be grazed at 10 to 14 inches. Allowing animals to graze to stubble height, then ensuring an adequate rest period will yield the optimal results. Planting species that will adapt to your soil environment is an important aspect for quality forage growth since drought tolerance and soil fertility ranges between species.

There are several examples of mixes that could be used to cover the entire grazing season. Perennial Ryegrass is a cool-season grass with early high growth from March to April and again in late September with low growth in May through August. The low growth of Perennial Rye occurs when most animals graze in early summer. Pairing Perennial Rye with several other species like Fescue, Orchardgrass, or BMR Sorghum will allow for overlapping growth and maximum potential.

The ultimate management goal should be to strive for quality then quantity! To seek additional information please contact your local extension agent.

"... how many producers can honestly say they manage pastures to their fullest potential?"

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—Cynthia Martel

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Upcoming Activities

April 1, 2013

Dairy Management Institute, Smyth County Farm Bureau Building, Marion. 276-783-5175 for details

April 13, 2013

State 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl Rockingham County, VA

April 20, 2013

VT Little All-American

May 4, 2013

Dairy Club at Virginia Tech Invitational Youth Dairy Judging Contest Blacksburg, VA

May 20, 2013

Hokie Cow Classic [Brochure](#) | [Registration](#)

June 15-22

Smyth Co. Livestock Club trip to Eastern Kansas

June 16-20, 2013

Southeast Dairy Youth Retreat, Georgia

If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services or other accommodations for any Extension event, please discuss your accommodation needs with the Extension staff at your local Extension office at least 1 week prior to the event.

For more information on Dairy Extension or to learn about current programs, visit us at VT Dairy—Home of the Dairy Extension Program at: www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu.



R.E. James,
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EXCITING NEW COLLABORATIVE GRANT TARGETS MASTITIS CONTROL AND MILK QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOUTHEAST

A team of Extension Specialists from six universities in the Southeast US have recently been awarded \$3M from the USDA to conduct an Extension-based project entitled “**Southeast Quality Milk Initiative (SQMI): Implementing Science-Based Recommendations to Control Mastitis & Improve Milk Quality in the Southeast**”. The start date of this 5-year project is February 1, 2013. The participants of the team include:

- Steve Oliver, Raul Almeida, Gina Pighetti, Peter Krawczel & Mark Fly from The University of Tennessee
- **Christina Petersson-Wolfe from Virginia Tech**
- Jeffrey Bewley, Lori Garkovich, Donna Amaral-Phillips & Michelle Arnold from the University of Kentucky
- Steve Nickerson from the University of Georgia
- Stepahanie Hill-Ward from Mississippi State University
- Albert DeVries from the University of Florida

Project summary:

The dairy industry in the Southeast (SE) is in serious jeopardy. A significant decline in the number of dairy farms coupled with lower milk yields and production of lower quality milk poses serious problems for the sustainability of the SE dairy industry. Our approach for improving the sustainability of the SE dairy industry is development of a collaborative outreach, educational, and applied research program on mastitis control assembled by milk quality professionals from six Land-Grant Universities in the SE. We will identify economic and social factors affecting limited adoption of practices known to control mastitis, and develop strategies to counter the ration-

ale for non-adoption. Information from applied research and on-farm demonstrations will be packaged for educational and outreach delivery to stakeholders including dairy producers, veterinarians, university students, and extension personnel using innovative methods of delivery including DAIREXNET and Spanish translations. We will train producers and employees to utilize current and newly developed tools to make on-farm decisions that improve milk quality and increase production.

We will develop continuing education programs to create human resources needed for a more knowledgeable work force to promote milk quality. Implementation of cost effective mastitis prevention and control strategies for the SE region will result in higher milk quality, increased milk production, and improved profitability, all of which will benefit dairy producers in the SE and enhance the sustainability of the dairy industry in this region.

“Implementation of cost effective mastitis prevention and control strategies for the SE region will result in higher milk quality, increased milk production, and improved profitability, all of which will benefit dairy producers in the SE and enhance the sustainability of the dairy industry in this region.”

—Christina Petersson-Wolfe,
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