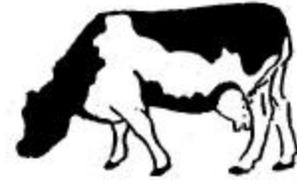


# DAIRY NOTES

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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## THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN KINGS COUNTY{PRIVATE }

demand. Most of the grains used are grown

California is the number one dairy state. Kings County ranks sixth among counties in the state, and is one of the top ten dairy counties in the nation in terms of value of milk and dairy products. So the dairy industry plays no small part in Kings County's local economy! Milk from dairies was valued at \$323 million dollars in Kings County in 1998 and it is the number one ag commodity in the county. In addition to commercial dairy farms where cows are cared for and milked, countless businesses supply feed, equipment and services necessary to support these dairies. Dairies are the most "high tech" of all agricultural industries. Computers are routinely used for herd management and specially engineered machines gently harvest milk from each cow two times a day. Average milk production is 20,629 pounds of milk per cow per year or about 7 to 8 gallons per cow per day! The average herd size in the county is 782 cows per dairy.

A tremendous amount of feed is required to fuel this milk production. A Holstein dairy cow weighs about 1400 pounds and she can eat about 50 pounds of dry feed per day. Feed accounts for half the cost of producing milk. It costs \$100 to \$120 dollars per month to feed one dairy cow. If you multiply that by the 113,000 cows in the county, you get a pretty hefty feed bill! The typical ration is made up of *forages* like corn silage, winter cereal silage and alfalfa hay; *grain* like corn or barley; and *by-products* like almond hulls or citrus pulp. Because of their unique digestive tracts, dairy cattle are able to convert wastes or by-products of other agricultural industries into nutritious food for people. For example, whole cottonseed, a by-product of the cotton industry provides one of the most ideal feeds for high producing dairy cows. Corn and wheat or barley for silage are double cropped on fields surrounding dairies. These crops utilize nutrients in manure generated by the dairy cows. Locally grown alfalfa is widely fed, but a considerable amount of high quality alfalfa hay is brought in to Kings County dairies from other places to meet

elsewhere, but they are processed and mixed with other ingredients locally.

Labor makes up the next biggest chunk of milk production costs after feed. Labor costs to care for the cows are about \$20 to \$25 per cow per month. All but one of the 144 dairies in Kings County are owned and operated by families -- some for two and three generations. (The one exception is the Corcoran State Prison dairy). Since our herds tend to be large, hired labor is used to supplement family labor. Depending on the size of the dairy, there may be as few as one or as many as 20 hired employees to help feed, milk and provide care for the animals.

The majority of dairy producers in Kings County belong to cooperatives that process and/or market the milk. These include Dairyman's Division of Land of Lakes, Danish Creamery, California Milk Producers, and Dairy Farmers of America. Local companies that process a considerable volume of milk from dairies in the area are Leprino Foods in Lemoore and Marquez Brothers' El Mexicano in Hanford. California produces a tremendous amount of cheese, -- Kings County is number three behind Merced (#1) and Tulare (#2) in cheese production. Yogurt, sour cream and ice cream (Superior!) are some of the other high quality dairy products manufactured in Kings County.

Mild weather, access to abundant high quality feed and smart, hard working people have contributed to making California the number one dairy state in the nation. Kings County has played no small part in making that happen, so it makes perfect sense to congratulate and celebrate the local dairy industry during June Dairy Month!



Carol Collar, Dairy Farm Advisor