

EFFECTIVE COW TRAFFIC AND GROUPING PATTERNS AT ROBERTS DAIRY

Art Graden, Manager

Roberts Dairy

Roberts Dairy is located three miles west of Palatka just North of Hwy 100. The 1200 cow dairy has one double-12 herringbone milking parlor with 24 milking units, two holding areas, (one with cow-washers and one for cow movement to the parlor), and a shaded lane leading to the holding area. The parlor and feeding barn have been constructed within the past five years.

Storage and mixing facilities for bulk feed are available and used at Roberts Dairy. A number of 25 to 30 ton storage tanks are used to store ingredients prior to mixing and prior to feeding a complete feed. Permanent pasture is available during the year and some hay is fed to the cows all during the year. The hay is produced at Roberts Dairy.

The feeding barn has two fairly wide feeding troughs that allows cows to eat from either side. The feed is fed mechanically through a badger feeding system. All cows are separated according to level of milk production and regrouped each month according to the following scheme:

Table 1. Grouping System Used at Roberts Dairy

Herd No.	Pounds of Milk	Type of Breeding	Time in Feed Barn
4	Slow Milkers	AI	45 Minutes
3	Under 35 Lbs	Natural	15 Minutes
2	35 - 50 Lbs	AI	30 Minutes
1	Over 50 Lbs	AI	45 - 60 Minutes
0	Fresh Under 60 Days	None	45 - 60 Minutes

Management at the dairy is happy with the grouping system employed at the dairy a few years ago. While the system of feeding offers the greatest advantage through greater feed control and more flexibility in feeding high producing cows extra feed, it also aids in the execution of other management practices. As noted in the above table, certain groups

of cows are bred with AI while Natural service is used for the lower producing cows and only heat records are recorded on fresh cows. The grouping system used at Roberts dairy offers advantages in identification and handling as well as breeding.

The importance of well designed lanes and corrals for excellent cow traffic movement cannot be overemphasized. The movement of cows to and from the parlor and to the eating area requires a minimum amount of labor. A crowd gate is not used at Roberts dairy but is sometimes useful in getting the cows in the parlor. Automatic washers are used to clean the cows since the cows are frequently muddy and become a burden for the milkers to clean. All ramps and lanes are well sloped to prevent the accumulation of water puddles. Men escapes (about 11 inches clear) spaced throughout the design aid in cutting out cows in heat, sick cows, and increases movement of cows. An area in the old milking barn is provided for the hospital herd to avoid getting antibiotics and other residues in milk.