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Barren leads the state in dairy production

Lay of the land, grass quality contributes

By **BRAD DICKERSON**
Glasgow Daily Times

GLASGOW — With 130 million pounds of milk produced by 7,800 cows in 2007, Barren County has the distinction of being the state's No. 1 dairy producer.

The question is, how did Barren earn that distinction?

Tommy High, president of the Barren County Cattlemen's Association, said one of the area's biggest resources is grass.

"The lay of the land is very conducive to growing grass," he said. "Both beef and dairy (cattle), it's a good county for that."

Enice Schlappi, dairy marketing specialist for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, said Barren County was ranked No. 3 in the state for the amount of alfalfa hay produced in the state and second for all other varieties of hay.

Gary Tighlman, Extension agent for Barren County, said that dairy farmers take advantage of the good quality corn silage and alfalfa crops that are grown in the area.

"Barren County is an excellent county for growing forage as well," said Jack McAllister, dairy specialist with the University of Kentucky.

As for the number of dairy farmers, Schlappi said that as of June 1, there are 71 in Barren County. The number is second only to Christian County, the state leader, which has 85.

Barren County, according to Schlappi, is one of Kentucky's most active, citing events such as this weekend's June Dairy Days celebration at the Cave City Convention Center.

"They're great at promotion," she said. "They are one of the more active groups in the state."

Tighlman believes the success of Barren County's dairy farmers is found in their dedication.

"Our producers are very dedicated at producing a clean, wholesome product and looking at trying to be as efficient as possible," he said.

Billy Komar has been running his dairy operation in Barren County for the last five years after moving from Ohio.

He tends 900 head of cattle and, on average, ships between 65,000 to 70,000 pounds of milk a day.

"It's a business," he said. "You're on call 24/7. Sometimes you can get away, sometimes you can't."

Komar said that one of the advantages of farming in the Bluegrass — particularly in a rural community like Barren County — is how accepting residents are of the everyday farmer.

"The people in this area accept the dairy farm," he said. "Everybody's all for it."



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