

Agricultural Info Sheet

Dairy Farming in Chester County

Common Consumer Questions



Do grass-fed cows only eat grass?

Generally yes, when grass is available although they may get supplemental feed as well. However, as grass is not available year-round in most climates, they are fed hay and stored feeds in winter.

Do organic dairies in Chester County feed the same diet as nonorganic dairies?

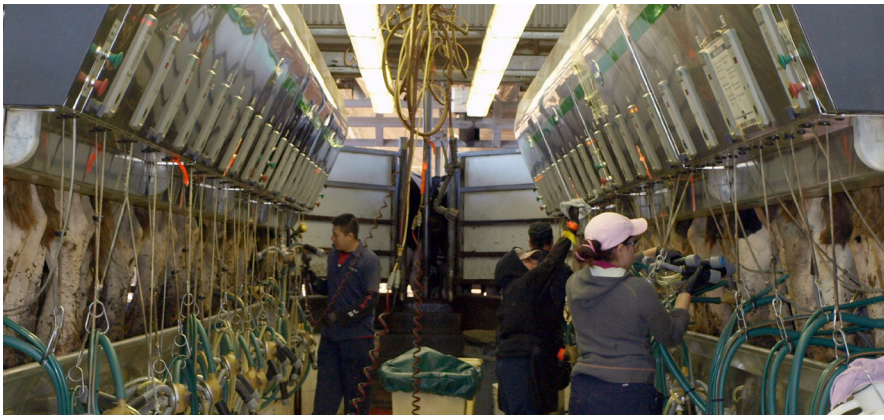
Generally yes, the same feeds are used; the difference is that the feed must come from organic feed sources and be organically certified. If, however, the organic dairy is pasture-grazing their herds, then the primary forage would be grass.

Is “grass-fed” synonymous with “organic” milk production?

No, they are not synonymous. Organic defines a method of production that does not use certain technologies or products. An organic dairy could feed their cows organically grown and certified feed as their primary food source and not rely upon pasture grass as the primary forage.

“There are approximately 21,600 dairy cows in Chester County.”





Do dairy farmers in Chester County use synthetic growth hormones (rBST)?

Yes, some do. Some farmers use it because it helps keep the cows' level of production higher throughout their lactation. Farmers can produce the same volume of milk with fewer cows in their herd therefore, having a smaller carbon footprint. Fewer cows need less barn space, possibly a smaller milking parlor, less feed, and they produce less manure and methane gases. The farmer may be able to grow more of their total feed on-farm which can make him more profitable due to reduced feed costs.

Why do some dairy farmers refrain from using rBST?

Farmers have different business practices. For instance, a farmer that is not philosophically opposed to using it still may not give it to their cows because it may result in some cows needing to be milked three times a day and they do not have the labor for a third milking session, or the farmers may not see a cost benefit because of the relatively small size of their herd to offset other biological and environmental factors. Or a farmer may belong to a cooperative that contracts with them to not use rBST (these cooperatives generally pay a higher premium to off-set the lower production).

What does "Hormone Free Milk" mean?

It is a misleading concept - all milk contains naturally occurring hormones; it is being produced by a lactating cow. What the concept implies is that the cows are not fed or injected with synthetic growth hormones (rBST).



Do antibiotics find their way into milk?

Yes, BUT that milk never finds its way into the commercial milk supply or to the consumer. If a cow is sick enough to warrant treating her with antibiotics (dairy cows are not routinely fed or injected with antibiotics), her milk is discarded until all of the antibiotics have left her system. Farmers face a financial penalty (they must pay for the tanker load of milk as well as the transportation and discarding costs) if they contaminate a milk tanker.



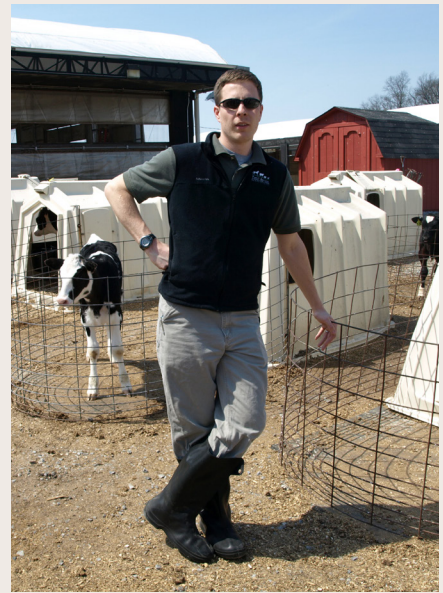
Chester County Economic Information

There are approximately 333 dairy farms in Chester County. (2017 Ag Census)



The estimated economic impact on Chester County from dairy farming is approximately \$298 million. (2017 Ag Census)

Chester County dairy farms rank 5th in dairy revenue generation in Pennsylvania with a total farm revenue of \$82.8 million representing 11.6 percent of the value of total agricultural products sold in the County. (2017 Ag Census)



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