

Pasture



Several factors such as land morphology, feed costs or even farmers' values can spark an interest in creating a pasture for dairy cattle.

Special measures must be put in place for this summer feeding practice to work properly.

Pasture surface area



- ✓ Estimate average pasture yields using harvested forage yields collected on the farm (kg DM/ha)
- ✓ Determine the cows' daily dry matter intake of grazed forage in their ration (kg DM of grazed forage/cow/d)
- ✓ Determine the average number of cows on pasture and the average number of days on pasture
- ✓ Total grazing area (ha) = (kg DM of grass/cow/d) x # of cows x # of days on pasture ÷ average pasture yield (kg DM/ha)

Fences



Permanent fences around the perimeter of paddocks that will be grazed

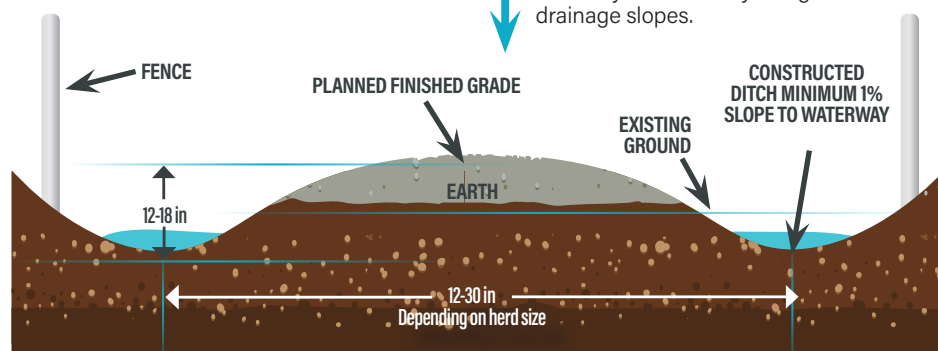
- ✓ Galvanized steel wire
- ✓ Aluminum wire

Fences to divide these large paddocks into strips every 12 or 24 hours

- ✓ Portable fences composed of woven/electric wire, reels and removable posts

Access lane

The figure below illustrates the least expensive option to create an access lane for cows to go out to pasture every day, while keeping them dry and clean by using drainage slopes.



Adapted from: Lanes That Keep Dairy Animals High and Dry, Paul Daigle, Ken Barnett, Tom Cadwallader, Dennis Cosgrove; 2009

Drinking water



Because animals are continuously moving around the pasture, it is recommended that you:

- ✓ Set up a pipeline to convey water throughout the pasture and install valves in each paddock
- ✓ Move the water trough often to avoid muddy soil
- ✓ Place water troughs within 200 metres of cows

Heat stress



There are several solutions to prevent heat stress at pasture:

- ✓ Sending the cows outside at night or immediately after the evening milking
- ✓ Optimizing shade and installing a good ventilation system in the milking parlour
- ✓ Providing shade in the paddocks (e.g., with windbreaks)

It is very important to prepare the pasture before the animals' arrival to ensure a good season.



Proper seeding management and adequate animal movements based on the state of the pasture and soil are key to succeeding. Although feeding management is different when the animals are fed using a pasture, dietary needs and herd health must be monitored just as closely as when the animals are fed exclusively indoors.

Mistakes to avoid



- ✗ Avoid letting animals graze on undrained land
- ✗ Avoid leaving animals on the same paddock for a long time
- ✗ Avoid using only one type of plant for grazing
- ✗ Avoid providing a small water trough with a low water flow rate