



Cattle Farmer Monthly June



Is raising grass-fed cattle the way to go?

Marvin Harris

Grass-fed beef is in high demand. Many consumers say it tastes better than grain-fed beef. And they're willing to pay more for it.

The down side of grass-fed beef is the cost. Grasses have a lower **feed conversion efficiency** than corn or soy. Cattle in pastures are also less likely to receive **growth hormones**. Thus, it takes longer for them to gain mass than their corn or soy fed counterparts. Furthermore, they do not receive **antibiotics** and can get sick more easily. Finally, corn-fed **herds** often produce higher grades of beef.

However, there are methods to counteract those shortcomings. Some grass-fed cattle forage in pastures for the first few years of life. Before shipping them to a **processing facility**, **ranchers** send them to a feedlot for **grain finishing**. For approximately six months they receive special **feed rations** to bring them up to **market weight** rapidly.

Get ready!

① Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- 1 How important is the beef industry in your country?
- 2 What type of meat is most popular in your country?

Reading

② Read the magazine article. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 — Soy-fed cattle grow faster than grass-fed cattle.
- 2 — Grass-fed herds produce higher grade beef.
- 3 — Grass-fed cattle do not eat in feedlots.

④ Fill in the blanks with the correct words and phrases from the word bank.

Word Bank

growth hormones
antibiotics herd
market weight beef

Vocabulary

③ Match the words (1-8) with the definitions (A-H).

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 — rancher | 5 — feed ration |
| 2 — grass-fed | 6 — processing facility |
| 3 — grade | 7 — grain finishing |
| 4 — cattle | 8 — feed conversion efficiency |

- A a selected amount of food given to an animal
 B a place where animals are butchered
 C cows and bulls
 D a rating of the quality of beef
 E a measurement of how animals convert feed into mass
 F primarily eating grass from a pasture
 G a farmer who raises livestock
 H feeding cattle grain to raise weight before slaughter

- 1 The cattle in the _____ are bigger than those in the pasture.
- 2 _____ is one of the most popular sources of food for humans.
- 3 Grass-fed cattle take longer to achieve _____.
- 4 Most cattle receive _____ to keep them free of disease.
- 5 _____ help cattle grow more quickly.
- 6 Disease can spread very quickly through a _____ of cows.

- ④ Listen and read the magazine article again. How can farmers get around the problems related to grass-fed beef?

Listening

- ⑤ Listen to a conversation between a rancher and her assistant. Choose the correct answers.

- What is the conversation mainly about?
 - a drop in beef prices
 - a mistake with antibiotics
 - an increase in cattle weight
 - a change in cattle raising methods
- Why does the man oppose the woman's suggestions?
 - The ranch could lose money
 - The grass-fed trend is ending
 - The cattle don't need antibiotics
 - The cattle won't reach market weight

- ⑥ Listen again and complete the conversation.

Assistant: Are you suggesting we switch to 1 _____?

Rancher: I'm thinking about it.

Assistant: I don't think that's a good idea. The cattle will 2 _____ to reach market weight.

Rancher: I understand that. It'll take longer and it'll cost more.

Assistant: I hope you'll 3 _____.

Rancher: Well, 4 _____ I'd like to stop giving them antibiotics and growth hormones, as well.

Assistant: That could be a 5 _____ We could lose a lot of money on sick and small cows.

Rancher: I 6 _____. But we can also charge a lot more for grass-fed, hormone-free beef.

Speaking

- ⑦ With a partner, act out the roles below based on Task 7. Then, switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

Are you suggesting we switch to ...
 I don't think that's a good idea.
 We can charge a lot more for ...

Student A: You are a rancher. Talk to Student B about:

- grass-fed cattle
- growth hormones
- costs and prices

Student B: You are an assistant to a rancher. Answer Student A's questions.

Writing

- ⑧ Use the conversation from Task 8 to fill out the rancher's memo. Include the reasons, costs and benefits of switching to grass-fed beef.

Memo: All Staff Jackson Ranch

Soon, we will _____
 That's because _____
 This means _____
 But we can also _____

Let me know if you have any questions.

Owner Jackson Ranch



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Effective Use of Space in Swine Farming

Dr. Carol Braun and Dr. Charles Pierce

Many swine farms do not provide optimal space arrangements (Turner 2009). We studied twenty **sow farms** to learn about the best space arrangements in use today. Below are the findings from our research.

The space requirements are different depending on the type of farm. Nevertheless, it appears important to provide more than the minimally required **static space**. Otherwise, **hogs** tend to be sicker and less productive. In **farrow-to-finish farms**, providing **social space** is advisable. When **sows** have adequate social space they produce healthier **litters**. In the case of **farrow-to-nursery farms**, providing social space does not add additional value. Therefore, we found that it is sufficient to provide adequate **dynamic space**.



Vocabulary

③ Match the words (1-6) with the definitions (A-F).

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 1 — hog | 4 — dynamic space |
| 2 — sow farm | 5 — farrow-to-finish farm |
| 3 — litter | 6 — farrow-to-nursery farm |

- A a group of baby pigs
B a farm that raises female pigs
C enough space for an animal to move
D a farm that raises pigs to market weight
E a pig that has achieved market weight
F a farm that raises pigs until they are weaned

Get ready!

① Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- Is the swine industry large in your country?
- What are the challenges of swine farming?

Reading

② Read the page from an agricultural industry journal. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- Providing minimal static space leads to healthier hogs.
- Social space is recommended in farrow-to-finish farms.
- Farrow-to-nursery farms only need dynamic space.

④ Write a word that is similar in meaning to the underlined part.

- The female pig just had another litter. — — —
- Larger pens provide space that allows animals to interact with one another. — o c — — — s — — c —
- The amount of space required to contain an animal's body is not enough; the pig needs room to move.
s t — — — — — p — — e
- Raising pigs and related animals is difficult. — w — — —

- 3 Listen and read the page from an agricultural industry journal again. Why is it better to provide more space for hogs?

Listening

- 1 Listen to a conversation between two swine farmers. Choose the correct answers.

- 1 What is the farmers' problem?
 - A There is not enough storage space.
 - B The sow pens have no static space.
 - C The sows have decreased productivity.
 - D The old barn is not big enough for the sows.
- 2 What will the farmers likely do next?
 - A increase feed rations
 - B build additional pens
 - C rearrange the sow pens
 - D move animals into the old barn

- 2 Listen again and complete the conversation.

- Farmer 1: I'm worried. Our sows aren't as productive as they used to be.
- Farmer 2: It started when we changed those pens to storage space.
- Farmer 1: Yeah. The sows seem restless with less room to move around.
- Farmer 2: You might be on to something. What if we increase their social space?
- Farmer 1: I don't know. We don't have much room 1 _____.
- Farmer 2: Well, I read an interesting article about this problem. It said social space makes a big difference in 2 _____ - _____ farms like ours.
- Farmer 1: I guess we overlooked that when we used those pens for storage.
- Farmer 2: Well, we can fix it. Let's get all the storage out of those pens. We can 3 _____ a few other pens so the sows can interact.
- Farmer 1: That's not a bad idea.
- Farmer 2: But what can we 4 _____ storage?
- Farmer 1: I think we can 5 _____ in the old barn.
- Farmer 2: 6 _____.

Speaking

- 8 With a partner, act out the roles below based on Task 7. Then, switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

Our sows aren't as productive as ...
 What if we increase their social space?
 Well, we can fix it.

Student A: You are a swine farmer. Talk to Student B about:

- sow productivity
- social space
- changing pens

Student B: You are a swine farmer. Discuss your sows with Student A.

Writing

- 9 Use the conversation from Task 8 to describe the changes to the swine farm. Include what changes will be made and why?

Proposed Changes: _____

Cause: _____

Effects: _____

