NEWSLETTER 15

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

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DIVISION OF RESEARCH & EXTENSION

How to Choose Good Dairy Cows

What to look for when buying a cow

When buying a cow you need to be careful not to buy a good looking cow but low milk producing cow. A good grade cow can produce very little milk if it is not kept well. The best dairy cow in Europe may produce less milk in most parts of Kenya because the environment may not support full expression of production potential. It is therefore important to choose a cow with the right characteristics for the environment where production will occur.

A dairy cow with good body features

It is still important to feed your cow properly and protect it from diseases and harsh weather. Characteristics of a dairy cow are passed to her from her parents. True records will help you choose cows from good families. That is why farmers need examine reliable farm records to guide their decisions when choosing good cows.

What to look for when choosing a good cow

Choose a cow with history of high milk production. For a heifer, use records of its parents, grandparents or other relatives.

Good udder is important for high milk production. Look for a wide but medium sized udder that does not hang loosely. The teats that point downwards and are spaced evenly makes milking easy.

Udder of proper size and shape

Strong legs and feet enable a cow to feed and walk comfortably especially when pregnant. Choose a cow with straight legs but wide apart when observed from behind or the front. When observed sideways, the rear legs are slightly curved while the front legs stand straight.

Avoid choosing a cow with a lot of flesh. A good dairy cow has lean and long wedge shaped bodies which enable them to convert much feed into milk. They also have long necks and straight backlines.

Choose cows from a family with a history of getting pregnant easily when inseminated. Select cows that also give birth easily. Look for cows with a calm behavior since they are easier to handle and milk.

Cows with bad temper are hard to milk

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