

# Is it possible for large herds to graze while keeping a high milk yield level?

## The experience of two Belgian dairy farms.

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**INTRODUCTION :** Grazing is more and more abandoned because of increasing size of herds and automation of milking systems. However grazing is beneficial from several points of view including economics.

### The aim of this study was

- To assess the impact of grazing on milk performance in 2 Belgian dairy herds
- The follow-up lasted 2 years

### MATERIALS AND METHODS



• 2 Herds :H1 – H2

•Grazing periods:

✓ 2013: H1 – H2: 184 d

✓ 2014:H1: 192 d- H2:216 d

✓ Grass on average: 30% of the diet



**H1:**

2 robots « DeLaval »  
35 Ha pastures -2.6 cows/Ha  
10 plots from 1.4 to 7.7 Ha  
Rotational grazing

**H2:**

2 robots « Lely »  
42 Ha pastures – 3 cows/Ha  
8 plots  
Strip grazing

### RESULTS

	H1		H2			
	2013-2014		2013		2014	
	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer	Winter	Summer
Nb cows	87 ± 11	91±11	122±4	122±4	127±7	137±3
MY(kg cow <sup>-1</sup> .d <sup>-1</sup> )	30.2 ±7.2	29.7± 7.8	25.9± 0.7 ***	26.3±1.7	26.8±0.9 ***	27.4 ±0.7
Conc (kg cow <sup>-1</sup> .d <sup>-1</sup> )	3.67±1.66	3.70±0.99	2.43±0.15	2.69±0.21	3.00±0.11	3.30±0.18
DIM*(d)	240±164	221±142	201±4	211±211	185±6	201±10

### Milk composition

**Fat%:** decrease in H1-H2 at grazing (H1: 4.06 to 3.90% - H2:4.30 to 4.1%)

**Protein%:** decrease at grazing (H1: 3.40 to 3.35%–in 2014 H2: 3.51 to 3.46%)

**SCC\*:** increased at grazing (H1: 216 to 273.10<sup>3</sup> ml<sup>-1</sup>– H2:173 to 230.10<sup>3</sup> ml<sup>-1</sup>)

**CONCLUSION:** grazing is possible even with high production levels

\*DIM: days in milk – SCC: somatic cell count

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