



Grouping Strategies for Feeding Lactating Dairy Cattle

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Rationale

- A large proportion of lactating dairy cows might be overfed
 - Ration is the same for all cows in a group
 - Nutritionists and farmers prefer to give the “higher” ration rather than the “lower” one
 - Lower producing animals receive more than required nutrients



Rationale

- **Grouping for feeding purposes and providing different rations make sense**
 - **Increases nutrient use efficiency**
 - **Saves money**
 - **Increases profitability**
 - **Decreases nutrient excretion**



Why Not More Grouping?

- Farm facilities not appropriated
- Additional equipment required
- Management constraints
- Labor constraints
- Additional investment required
- ...



Strategies for Grouping

- Several strategies could exist
- The most accepted strategy in the literature:
 - Individual cow nutrient requirement:
 - Mcal/lb of DM, and
 - % CP of DM
- Number of animals
- Farm's capacity to handle and feed different group diets



Approach



1. Get Herd Data

- Time-specific database is needed (DHIA Test Records)
- For every record (cow) :
 - Cow identification (Cow ID)
 - Lactation (parity)
 - Days after calving (DIM)
 - Milk production (lb/d)
 - Milk fat content (%)
 - Body weight (lb; optional)



2. Nutrient Requirements

- Net Energy (NE)
 - Total NE = NE(maintenance) + NE(milk)
 - $NE(\text{maintenance}) = 0.079 \times BW^{0.75}$
 - $NE(\text{milk}) = \text{Milk} \times (0.36 + 0.0969 \times \text{FAT}\%)$
 - $NE \text{ (Mcal/lb DM)} = \text{Total NE/DMI}$

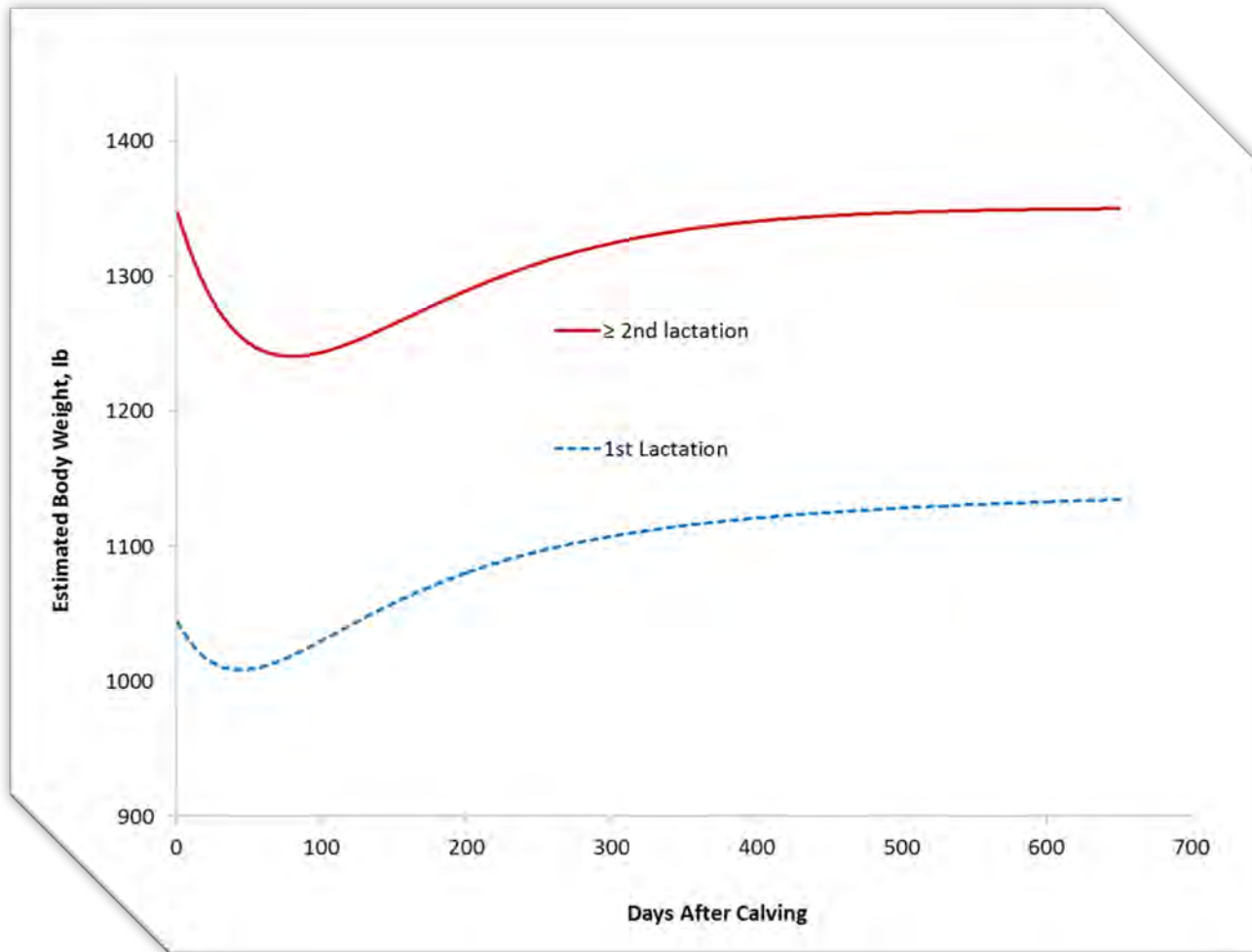


2. Nutrient Requirements

- Crude Protein (CP)
 - Total CP = CP(maintenance) + CP(milk)
 - $CP(\text{maintenance}) = 104.78 + 0.73 \times BW - 0.000015432 \times BW^2$
 - $CP(\text{milk}) = \text{Milk} \times (4586 + 1036 \times \text{FAT}\%)$
 - $\% \text{ CP} = \text{Total CP} / \text{DMI}$



2. Cow's Body Weight



Korver Function described by Van Arendonk (1985) and parameterized by Kalantari et al. (2010)

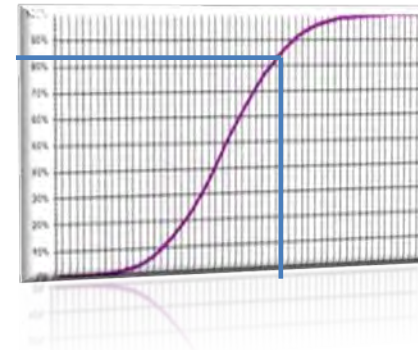
2. Dry Matter Intake (DMI)

- DMI = function of DIM, BW, and fat corrected milk (FCM)
- $$\text{DMI} = (0.372 \times 4\% \text{FCM} + 0.0968 \times \text{BW}^{0.75}) \times (1 - e^{(-0.192 \times ((\text{DIM}/7) + 3.67)})$$
- $$4\% \text{FCM} = 0.4 \times \text{Milk} + 15 \times (\text{FAT}\%/100) \times \text{Milk}$$



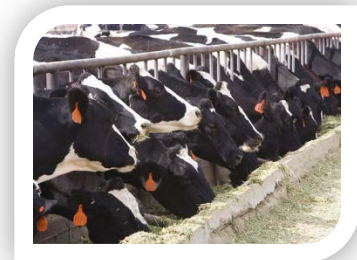
3. Group Requirements

- Diet is formulated based on:
 - **83rd percentile (mean + 1 standard deviation) of the group nutrient requirements**
 - **83rd percentile of NEI, and**
 - **83rd percentile of CP**



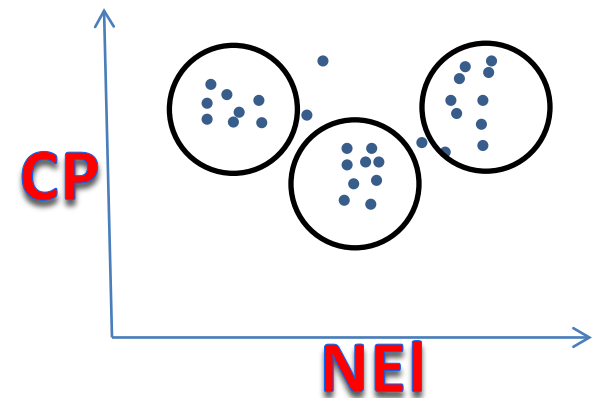
4. Number of Groups

- **Very little or no additional gain after more than 4 feeding groups**
- **More than 4 feeding groups for lactating cows may be impractical**
- **Possible number of groups: 2, 3, or 4**
- **Depends on the farm facilities, equipment and management**



5. Criteria for Grouping

- Farm own criteria, if any
- Main criteria that could be compared:
 - Days after calving (DIM)
 - Fat corrected milk (FCM)
 - Merit = $FCM/BW^{0.75}$
 - Cluster = Cows alike in NEI and CP requirements



6. Assign Cows to Groups

- Pricing NEI and CP
 - Deducted from “referee” feeds like corn and SBM
 - $\text{Corn \%CP} + \text{Corn Mcal NE} = \$/\text{lb corn}$
 - $\text{SBM \%CP} + \text{SBM Mcal NE} = \$/\text{lb SBM}$
 - Other “referee” feeds could be used
 - Nutritionists or farmers could have these values already available



6. Assign Cows to Groups

$$\text{Max (IOFC)} = \sum_{\text{group}=1}^G (\text{IOFC}_{\text{group}})$$

$$\text{IOFC}_{\text{group}} = (\text{Milk}_{\text{group}})(\text{MilkPrice}) - (\text{FeedCost}_{\text{group}})$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{FeedCost}_{\text{group}} = & (\text{83\%tileCP}_{\text{group}})(\text{CPPrice}) \\ & + (\text{83\%tileNEL}_{\text{group}})(\text{NELPrice}) \end{aligned}$$

IOFC = Income Over Feed Cost,
G = total number of groups: 2, 3, or 4



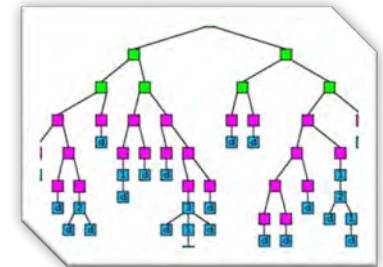
7. Calculate Net Return

- Include additional costs and returns
 - Additional cost of management for having more feeding groups
 - Milk production depression cost because of social behavior by moving cows among groups
 - Cost savings on additives giving only to some group(s)
 - ...



8. Analyses Options

- Farmer does group, but can't do more groups:
 - Compare grouping criteria
 - Optimize animals in each one of the groups
- Farmer does group and can do more groups:
 - Select the right number of groups
 - Select the right group criterion
 - Optimize animals in each one of the groups



8. Analyses Options

- Farmer does not group, but farm has capabilities of grouping:
 - Increase the number of feeding groups
 - Select the right grouping criterion
 - Optimize animals in each one of the groups



Online Decision Support System

Dairy Management UW-Extension
University of Wisconsin-Madison



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Grouping Strategies for Feeding Lactating Dairy Cattle

Overview

Upload Farm Details

Group Cows

Reap Benefits

Sample Farm: Total Cows = 470

This tool evaluates feeding grouping strategies in lactating cows. It uses different criteria to group, finds the cows to conform a group (optimizes), suggests a group diet ration based on Net Energy (NEL, MCal/lb) and Crude Protein (CP, %), compute the expected Income Over Feed Cost (IOFC), and the additional economic benefit of feed grouping after management of additional groups and an expected milk depression on lactating cows regrouped.

In order to use this tool a herd test file is needed. This should contain information regarding Cow ID, Lactation, Days in Milk (DIM), Milk Produced, and Milk Fat Content. Optionally, for more accurate calculations, Body Weight (BW) could be added (if BW is not provided, the tool calculates BW based on lactation and DIM after a user-entered average BW for primiparous and multiparous cows). The tab with name upload farm details helps the user upload an excel file with those parameters. It is suggested to first download the parameters file to a local computer and then use this as a template to enter farm specific data. Once the data are entered, the file could be back uploaded. The tool will indicate which file is being used. The number of lactating cows in the file will be automatically counted and displayed. Also, in this tab, the user defines indirectly the price of feed energy (\$/MCal) and feed protein (\$/ lb CP), which are based on nutritive content and prices of refereed feeds (Corn and Soybean meal). The user can over-write these values if desired.

Once the data have been entered, the user could move to the tab with name 'Group Cows'. This tab is self-explanatory and follows a decision tree structure to help the user analyze grouping strategies. After following the questions in the decision tree, the user could hit the 'Analyze' button and get the results in the 'Reap Benefits' tab. This last tab of the tool ('Reap Benefits') displays the economic benefit of different group strategies compared to the farm defined current strategy.

Enter the Data

Overview

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Reap Benefits

Sample Farm: Total Cows = 470

Prices

	CP%	Nel, MCal/lb	\$/ (Unit)
Corn	<input type="text" value="0.1"/>	<input type="text" value="0.9"/>	<input type="text" value="6.72"/> (\$/bu)
Soybean Meal	<input type="text" value="0.5"/>	<input type="text" value="0.88"/>	<input type="text" value="350"/> (\$/ton)

Please note that the values highlighted with this color will be used by the tool.

	Calculated Values	User Input	
\$/lb CP	0.14337	<input type="text" value="0.205524"/>	<input type="button" value="Hide"/>
\$/Mcal NEL	0.1174		<input type="button" value="Edit"/>

Milk Price: (\$/cwt)

Download Parameter Excel File

Upload Parameters as Excel File

Upload the Excel File: No file chosen

Current File/Data Status

Using Data from Default Parameters File on Server

Enter the Data

COWID	Lactation	Days in Milk	(lb) Milk	(%) Fat	(lb) body weight (Optional)
6234	1	84	62	4.2	1111
132	7	118	73	4.6	1176
6196	1	198	85	4.3	1246
5516	4	199	114	3.1	1641
5561	4	280	108	3.1	1516
5961	2	173	91	3.5	1291
6149	1	253	88	2.9	1136
5667	4	138	92	3.7	1406
5960	3	159	110	3	1616
5817	2	244	115	4.1	1842
6191	1	190	90	4.4	1386
5045	7	370	108	4.3	1727
178	3	249	80	4	1131
5933	2	211	99	3.4	1431
190	2	211	74	4	1031
5677	3	310	115	2.5	1581
6161	1	190	86	3.8	1246
5764	3	145	97	3.8	1541
3273	6	288	112	2.8	1591
5896	2	283	109	2.8	1541
5778	3	121	73	4.8	1241
5852	2	301	105	2.5	1421
6190	1	131	80	3.1	1151
6194	1	145	77	4.6	1236
5909	2	173	105	3	1546
5570	4	180	106	4.6	1832



Analyses Options: Choices

Overview

Upload Farm Details

Group Cows

Reap Benefits

User File(cluster_inputxls): Total Cows = 400



Do you group and feed different diets to lactating cows?

??



What criteria do you use to group lactating cows?

??

How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?

??



How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?

??



How do you group your lactating cows?

??

Do you group and feed different diets to lactating cows?

YES

NO

Do you group and feed different diets to lactating cows?

NO



How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to??

What criteria do you use to group lactating cows??



How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to??



How do you group your lactating cows??

[BACK](#)

How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?

- Two
- Three
- Four

Please enter the size of each group that you can handle.

Group	Group1	Group2	Group3
Size	100	100	200

Please enter the CP and NEL values currently being used:

NE (Mcal NEL/lb)	CP(%)
0.82	18

Additional cost (labor, management, and machinery) of feeding and grouping lactating cows into 3 groups instead of 1 (\$/herd/month):

Estimate milk depression caused due to re-location of lactating cows :

Loss of milk production (lb/d):

Number of days the loss continues (d):

Would you save money because of using less feed additives with more groups? If yes, how much would you save? \$/herd/month

Press analyze to know the benefits of grouping.

[Analyze](#)

Make Decisions

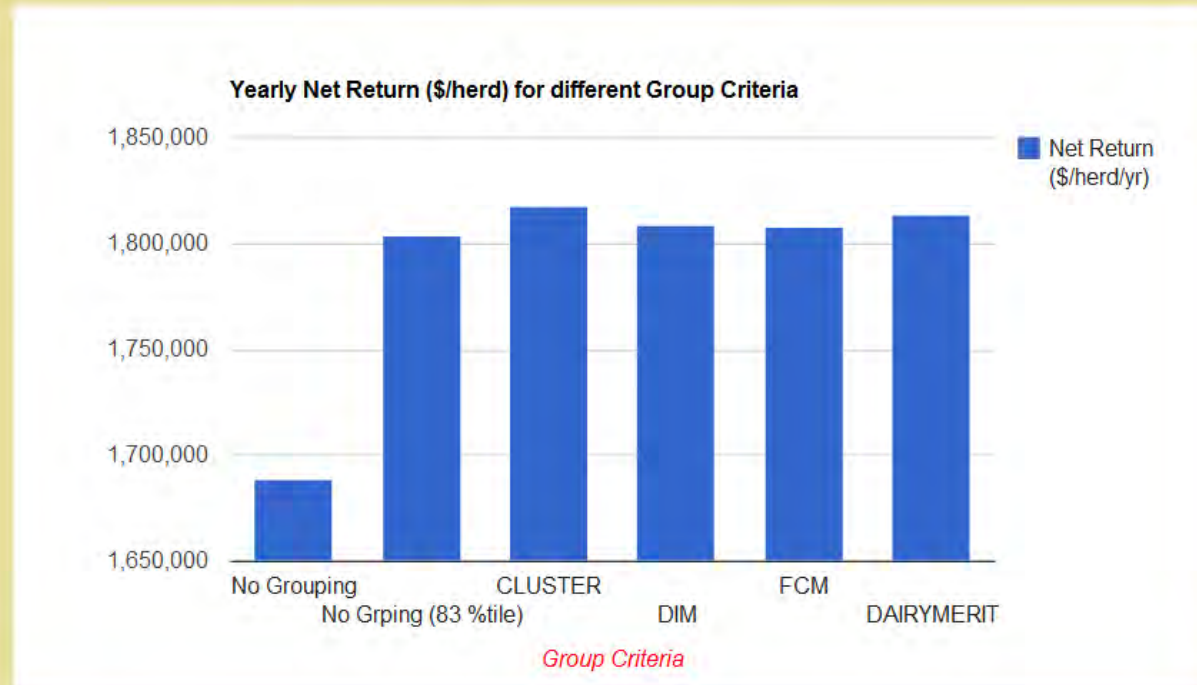
Overview

Upload Farm Details

Group Cows

Reap Benefits

User File(cluster_inputxls): Total Cows = 400



Make Decisions

Click on the Group Criteria names (in blue/red) to know the actual distribution of cows across different groups.

Group Criteria	Group Number	Number Cows	NEL (Mcal/lb)	CP (%)	IOFC	Cost of Management	Cost of Milk Depression	Savings on Additives	Total (\$/herd/yr)	
						(\$/cow/d)	(\$/cow/d)	(\$/cow/d)		
NO GROUPING (No Optimization)	1	400	0.82	18.00	11.57					
	Mean		0.82	18.00	11.57	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	11.57	1,688,873
NO GROUPING (83 Percentile)	1	400	0.72	16.43	12.36					
	Mean		0.72	16.43	12.36	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	12.36	1,803,905
CLUSTER	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.12					
	2	200	0.70	15.80	12.56					
	3	100	0.66	14.40	9.76					
	Mean		0.70	15.86	12.50	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	12.45	1,817,221
DIM	1	100	0.75	17.42	13.5					
	2	200	0.70	16.03	12.57					
	3	100	0.68	15.19	11.11					
	Mean		0.71	16.17	12.44	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	12.39	1,808,412
FCM	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.57					
	2	100	0.71	16.18	13.35					
	3	200	0.68	15.30	10.41					
	Mean		0.71	16.05	12.43	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	12.38	1,807,828
DAIRYMERIT	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.06					
	2	200	0.70	15.87	12.43					
	3	100	0.66	14.54	9.98					
	Mean		0.70	15.93	12.47	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	12.42	1,813,926

Make Decisions

Distribution of Cows across 3 groups for the following group criterion - CLUSTER

GROUP	1	2	3
CP (%)	17.43951	15.79596	14.39925
NE (Mcal/Kg)	1.66383	1.53926	1.44882
COW ID	5691	5531	6159
COW ID	5680	6150	6087
COW ID	5344	6193	6162
COW ID	6045	5404	5736
COW ID	5709	6134	3407
COW ID	5807	5826	5906
COW ID	6235	6253	5929
COW ID	6005	6188	6204
COW ID	4884	6231	5416
COW ID	5995	5910	5849
COW ID	5803	6209	6176
COW ID	6290	5999	6135
COW ID	5954	5565	6075
COW ID	5629	5511	5582
COW ID	5563	6003	5963
COW ID	6058	5817	5291
COW ID	5383	5403	6000
COW ID	6227	6223	5892
COW ID	6272	5793	6143
COW ID	6260	6203	5781
COW ID	5597	5751	5860



More Choices

Do you group and feed different diets to lactating cows?

YES

What criteria do you use to group lactating cows?
??

How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?
??

 How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?
??

How do you group your lactating cows?
??

BACK

How many groups do you have for your lactating cows?

- Two
- Three
- Four

How many groups can you handle?

- Two
- Three
- Four

Please enter the size of each group that you can handle.

Group	Size
Group1	100
Group2	100
Group3	100
Group4	100

NEXT

More Choices

Do you group and feed different diets to lactating cows?
YES

What criteria do you use to group lactating cows?
??

How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?
??

How many groups can you handle and feed different diets to?
four

How do you group your lactating cows?
??

BACK

What are the size and nutrients of your current groups?

Groups	Size	NE (Mcal NEL/lb)	CP (%)
Total	400		
Group1	200	0.82	18
Group2	200	0.77	17

Additional cost (labor, management, and machinery) of grouping lactating cows and feeding(\$/herd/month): 1000

Estimate milk depression caused due to re-location of lactating cows:

Loss of milk production (lb/d): 4

Number of days the loss continues (d): 5

Would you save money because of using less feed additives with more groups? If yes, how much would you save? 500 \$/herd/month

Press analyze to know how you can gain more by grouping better.

Analyze

Make Decisions

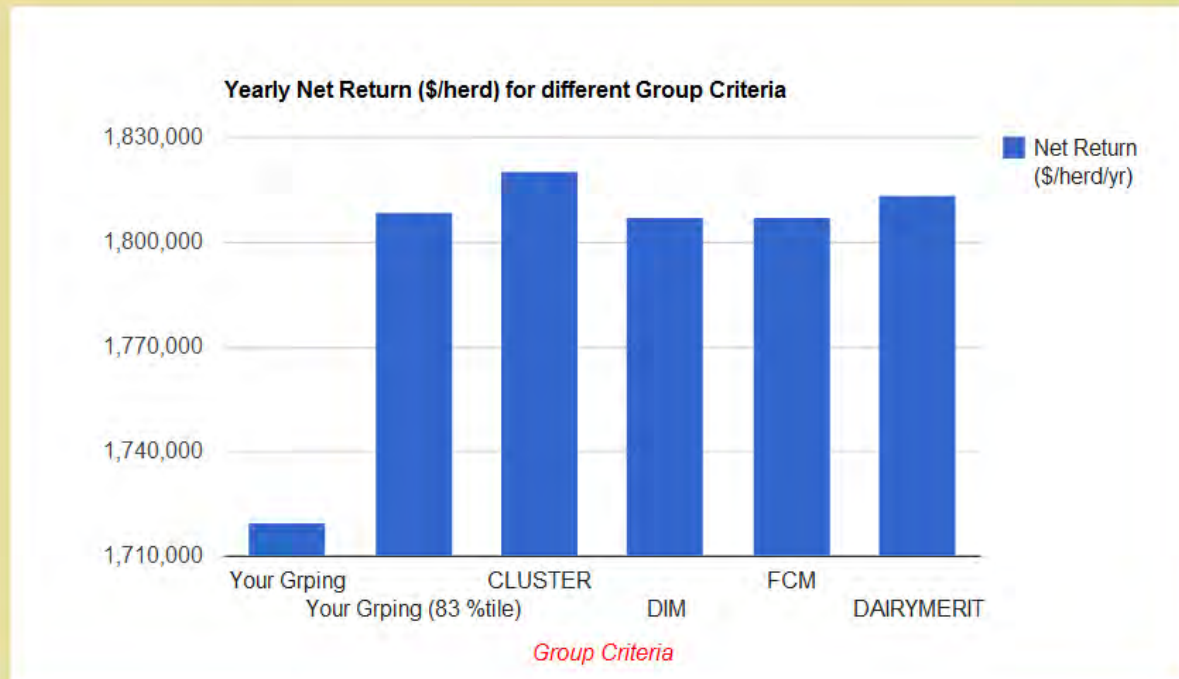
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User File(cluster_inputxls): Total Cows = 400



Make Decisions

Click on the Group Criteria names (in blue/red) to know the actual distribution of cows across different groups.

Group Criteria	Group Number	Number Cows	NEL (Mcal/lb)	CP (%)	IOFC	Cost of Management	Cost of Milk Depression	Savings on Additives	Total	
									(\$/cow/d)	(\$/herd/yr)
YOUR GROUPING (Current Diets)	1	200	0.82	18.00	10.31					
	2	200	0.77	17.00	13.25					
	Mean		0.80	17.50	11.78	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	11.78	1,719,745
	<hr/>									
YOUR GROUPING (83 Percentile Diets)	1	200	0.69	15.53	11.34					
	2	200	0.74	16.99	13.43					
	Mean		0.72	16.26	12.39	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	12.39	1,808,697
	<hr/>									
CLUSTER	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.12					
	2	100	0.70	15.93	13.66					
	3	100	0.68	15.20	11.58					
	4	100	0.66	14.40	9.76					
	Mean		0.70	15.74	12.53	-0.08	-0.02	0.04	12.47	1,820,282
<hr/>										
DIM	1	100	0.75	17.42	13.50					
	2	100	0.71	16.34	13.51					
	3	100	0.69	15.68	11.63					
	4	100	0.68	15.19	11.11					
	Mean		0.71	16.16	12.44	-0.08	-0.02	0.04	12.38	1,807,371
<hr/>										
FCM	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.57					
	2	100	0.71	16.18	13.35					
	3	100	0.69	15.54	11.18					
	4	100	0.67	14.93	9.65					
	Mean		0.71	16.02	12.44	-0.08	-0.02	0.04	12.38	1,807,201
<hr/>										
DAIRYMERIT	1	100	0.75	17.44	15.06					
	2	100	0.71	16.10	13.15					
	3	100	0.69	15.41	11.72					
	4	100	0.66	14.54	9.98					
	Mean		0.70	15.87	12.48	-0.08	-0.02	0.04	12.42	1,813,267

Check Online

Decision Support System



<http://DairyMGT.info>

→ Tools → Feeding →

**Grouping Strategies for Feeding
Lactating Dairy Cattle**