



# Overnight Pasture has no Effect on Milk Production during Early Lactation

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## Background:

Pasture based systems are perceived to provide environmental and welfare benefits. A concern with providing dairy cows access to pasture is reduced milk production.

## Objective:

**To evaluate the effects of overnight pasture on milk production and disease during early lactation.**

## Methods:

- Multiparous and primiparous Holstein dairy cows were paired by parity and assigned to:
  - a) continuous freestall (n=35)
  - b) freestalls (0700-2000h) and pasture (2000-0700h) (n=35)
- Daily TMR intake was recorded while cows were in the freestalls during the 3wk before and 3wk after calving
- Health and daily milk production were recorded for 3wk after calving



Figure 1. Cows going to pasture at the UBC Dairy Centre

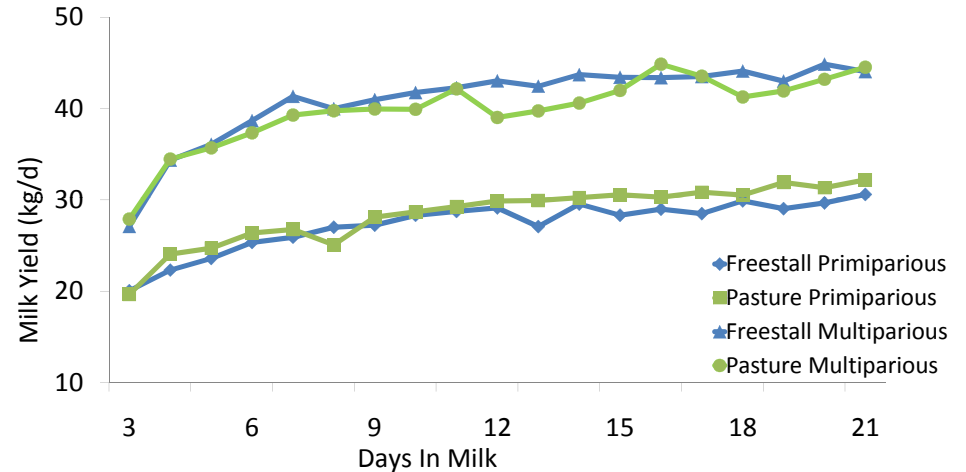


Figure 2. Milk production for the first 21 days in milk for cows housed indoors continuously or provided access to pasture overnight

## Results:

- Overnight pasture access did not reduce milk production
- No treatment difference in intake of TMR ( $P > 0.1$ )
  - continuous freestall:  $12.8 \pm 0.95$  kg/d
  - freestall and pasture:  $11.6 \pm 0.67$  kg/d
- No treatment difference in milk components or any measures of health (metritis, mastitis)

## Conclusion:

**For high producing Holsteins, overnight pasture access does not reduce milk production or increase disease prevalence during early lactation.**