

## Proper care of dairy cow improves milk production

Dairy cows whether exotic, hybrid or crossbred if not taken good care of in terms of feeding, housing and protection against diseases can remain unproductive dwindling the farmer's income.

Large scale and longtime dairy farmers consider balance diet as a must for their cows which is the right feed in the right amount and at the right time.

These farmers understand the role of Napier grass as fodder for animals. However, feeding their cows on Napier grass, little pasture and water, banana leaves and

such like is improper diet in dairy farming.

Napier grass for example is one of the best and reliable fodder for livestock, but farmers should know that about 70 to 80 per cent of this fodder is composed of water, meaning that the animals gets only 20 to 30 per cent dry matter.

"Besides selecting good breeds, proper feeding, housing and handling of dairy cows are sure ways of getting good yields and

income. A good breed that receives good feed and clean water, proper housing and gentle care gives more milk and money while a poorly managed one gives less milk and the farmer incurs huge veterinary expenses that reduce profits," said Dr David Michuki of Dao Chem company- the company which manufactures varieties of Vitamark livestock salt.

Experts advise that dairy cows especially of 400Kilogrammes

should be fed with about 15Kilogrammes of dry matter of fodder. This means that if you were to feed your cow on Napier grass, molasses, maize and wheat germ or any other grass fodder such should be of three feet on because this length of fodder grass has enough dry matter and less water hence adequate nutrition.

Kaganda Mathias is one of the leading smallholder dairy farmer in Njeru town which is adjacent to the Nile

Breweries Limited (NBL) plant. He has been feeding his dairy cows on beer by-products. "Feeling the big stomachs of my cows is not a simple task, I get other feeds from pasture grasses, fodder and my home-made silage that enables me to cater for their basal diet," said Kaganda. After a cow has been given food reach in proteins, vitamins and energy water is key. It comprises more than half the weight of an adult dairy cow which should be given 60 litres of water per day.

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