

## Dairy Cows and Farms

There were 121,823 dairy cows on 1,671 farms with milk cows (an average of 73 cows per farm) in 1997, representing a decline of 13 percent in the number of dairy cows from 1992-97. Even more dramatic is the decline in the number of farms with dairy cows, which fell 29 percent between 1992 and 1997. Table 21 indicates the number of farms with milk cows by size group.

	1997		1992		Change 1992-97	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1-19 cows	546	33	985	42	-439	-45
20-49 cows	219	13	290	12	-71	-24%
50-99 cows	428	26	571	24	-143	-25
100 plus cows	478	29	523	22	-45	-9
Total	1,671	100	2,369	100	-698	-29

Farms with dairy cows declined in all size groups, and the loss of 698 farms producing dairy products is a large loss for Virginia agriculture. However, the majority of dairies lost were small. Nearly two-thirds of the farms lost were those with only 1-19 cows. As shown in Table 21, nearly one-half of the small Virginia dairy farms disappeared between 1992-1997. Losses of nearly one-quarter of all farms were recorded in the size groups of 20-49 cows and 50-99 cows. Although large farm losses were only 9 percent, these 45 farms represented a significant proportion of Virginia dairy cows.

In 1997, Central Extension District had nearly 27,500 dairy cows on 340 farms (Table 22). The district had 20 percent of the state's dairy farms and about the same percent of farms with more than 50 cows. The district had 23 percent of the state's dairy cows in 1997. More than half of the district's farms with dairy cows were in Franklin and Bedford counties. Franklin County alone had more than one-third of the district's farms with dairy cows (95 farms). Franklin County dairies fell from 97 farms with more than 50 cows in 1992 to 82 such farms in 1997. Bedford County is the next most prominent county, with 26 farms of 50 or more cows in 1997, down from 36 in 1992. Franklin and Bedford counties lost more farms with greater than 50 cows than was the average across Virginia in the period 1992-97.

Extension District	Size Group				Total
	1-19 cows	20-49 cows	50-99 cows	100+ cows	
Central	101	50	87	102	340
Northeast	19	3	12	18	52
Northern	96	22	26	79	223
Northwest	110	42	200	183	535
Southeast	14	0	4	7	25
Southwest	206	102	99	89	496
Virginia	546	219	428	478	1,671

Northern District had approximately 17,500 dairy cows on 223 farms in 1997 (13 percent of Virginia dairy farms). The district had 12 percent of Virginia dairy farms with more than 50 cows. The principal planning district in terms of dairy cows is Rappahannock-Rapidan, with 133 herds (60 percent of district) and 70 percent of the district herds with more than 50 cows. The number of dairy farms in the planning district was down 32 from 1992. Of those farms with more than 50 cows, the planning district was down from 88 in 1992 to 74 farms in 1997. Fauquier County, followed by Culpeper and Madison, led the extension district in number of dairy farms.

In 1997, Northwest District had 535 farms with dairy cows (32 percent of all such Virginia farms), and approximately 44,500 milk cows (37 percent of state cows). The district had 42 percent of Virginia dairy farms with more than 50 cows. Central Shenandoah Planning District had 78 percent of district herds, 25 percent of all Virginia dairy farms, and 36 percent of Virginia dairy herds with more than 50 cows. Although the number of dairy farms declined 23 percent in the Central Shenandoah from 1992-97, the number of farms with herds larger than 50 cows fell by only 6 percent. Within Central Shenandoah Planning District, Rockingham County had 53 percent of the district's dairy herds in 1997, 17 percent of all Virginia dairies, and 26 percent of all Virginia dairies with more than 50 cows. Rockingham County declined from 318 dairies in 1992 to 283 dairies in 1997 (-11 percent), but farms with greater than 50 cows declined only 3 percent from 1992-97. The other important dairy county in Central Shenandoah Planning District is Augusta. Augusta County had 20 percent of district dairies in 1997, but had lost 28 percent of its dairy farms from 1992-97, including 11 farms of 1-19 cows, 13 farms of 20-49 cows, 14 farms of 50-99 cows, and 2 farms of more than 100 cows. Rockingham and Augusta counties together had more than 30 percent of Virginia dairy farms with more than 100 cows in 1997, up from 25 percent in 1992.

Southwest District had 496 dairies in 1997 (30 percent of Virginia dairies) and approximately 25,700 milk cows (21 percent of Virginia dairy cows). Southwest dairies are smaller than the state average. The district had only 21 percent of dairy farms with 50 or more cows, but 38 percent of farms with 1-9 cows. Mount Rogers Planning District had by far the most dairies in the district (255), and had 61 percent of the district's dairies with more than 50 cows. The larger dairies of this extension district are spread throughout Washington, Wythe, Smyth, and Montgomery counties. The number of dairies in Mount Rogers Planning District was down 34 percent from 1992, but +50-cow dairies were down only 12 percent. Washington County lost a large number of dairies from 1992-97 (-35 percent of all its farms with dairy cows, -33 percent of its dairies with more than 50 cows).