



Maatschap Lugtenberg - Oosterhuis - family farm



Tom & Jolien
Lugtenberg



103 hectares



animal management

GRAZING PRACTICES AND LONGEVITY OF DAIRY COWS

At dairy farm De Riet, located in the floodplains of the IJssel River in the eastern part of the Netherlands, the Lugtenberg family demonstrates how cow health, grazing, and nature-inclusive farming can go hand in hand. The farm keeps 150 MRIJ cows, a traditional Dutch dual-purpose breed used for both milk and meat production that is named after the rivers Meuse, Rhine, and IJssel. The focus of the farm is on keeping cows and calves healthy, aiming for a long and productive lifespan. The average age of the dairy cows at De Riet is six years and seven months, with an average culling age of eight years and five months. The lifespan for cows on the farm is long compared to Dutch standards. This longevity results in a low replacement rate: only 20 calves are retained each year. This not only reduces environmental impact but also saves costs. Grazing is at the core of the farm's management. The cows are kept outdoors for 230 to 240 days a year (3500 hours a year). The grazing season begins in March, followed by a period of day

and night grazing from Mid-April to October. During the hottest part of the year, from July 1st to September 1st, calving is avoided to reduce heat stress of the animals. When the grazing platform becomes drier in summer, around 50 animals are temporarily moved to a nearby nature reserve. These floodplains along the IJssel River offer abundant grass growth, relieving pressure on the home grazing platform while contributing to nature conservation. The results of this approach are visible both in the barn and on the land: there are few hoof problems, udder health is good, and the cows appear robust and healthy. The Lugtenberg family is an example of a farm that shows that long-living cows and nature-inclusive farming can reinforce each other and contribute to a resilient and sustainable dairy operation.

Farmer Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTZkzONLcNk>



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