

Breeding And Management Vital To Successful Dairyman

Breeding and management—which is more important? Larry W. Specht, Extension dairy specialist at The Pennsylvania State University, says neither can do the job alone and asking which is more important is like asking whether the right leg or left one is most essential to man's ability to walk.

During the past 20 years, major improvements have been made in the genetic merit of our dairy herds through the widespread use of artificial insemination. Unless this good breeding is matched by equally desirable feeding, milking, and related management practices, the dairyman will have little to show for his efforts to breed a better herd of cattle.

Specht says the man with the low herd average no longer has the excuse that he can't afford to buy the sort of bulls that his neighbor with the high production herd uses. Today it's likely that

they are both using sires from the same breeding unit.

This year promises to be no exception to the large number of herds exceeding 600 lbs. of butterfat per cow (or its milk equivalent depending upon the breed). Most of these herds have been bred entirely to sires from the A.I. units for the past 15 to 20 years.

There is no doubt that the inheritance for high production is readily available today, Specht emphasizes, but some dairymen need to improve their management efforts if they are to capitalize on it.

Met for First Time

On April 1, 1789, the House of Representatives held its first full meeting in New York City; thus began the history of the Congress of the United States.

Today's Calves Are Tomorrows Dairy Herd

Joe S. Taylor, Extension dairy specialist at The Pennsylvania State University, says that dairymen should raise every sound female calf born each year for herd replacements.

The cows in DHIA herds in their lifetime average only four calves born, half of which are males. Hence, if a dairyman allows for some culling at birth, some losses due to disease or accident, plus some culling of two-year old cows that do not meet production or type standards, then he must start all female sound calves born to maintain a high level of production in his herd.

Many dairy herds have expanded in size, says Taylor. The over-100 milking cow herd has become common. However, many of these larger herd owners have done nothing to provide adequate calf raising facilities to start 50 or more female calves each year. Dairymen with large herds learn quickly and sometimes with disasterous

results that without good facilities and a proper calf raising program they are in trouble.

Taylor says that dairymen should not be criticized for ex-

panding housing and milking facilities first. This is where the farm income is produced. However, an adequate calf raising facility and program must follow herd size expansion quickly, before calf losses becomes a serious problem.

Information on calf raising facilities for large dairy herds is available through your county agent's office.

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