

Dairy Pipeline

By
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Agent

Cows Are Your Business
If you are a dairyman, the dairy cow is your business. Her offspring are your future.

Unlike most other business property, she is a living, sensitive creature that is working for you 24 hours a day — and without overtime pay. She doesn't even quit at the end of the day, even while she is sleeping, nor does she shut down for weekends and holidays! Wouldn't it be nice though if she did — at least once in a while?

Like most good workers, a cow will usually respond favorably to good treatment. In other words, if you take good care of her, chances

are, she'll take good care of you. How well a cow will perform is determined in part by her inherited genetic ability to produce. Fortunately, we are well blessed with a large selection of good dairy bulls.

Assuming we have bred our cows "right", our next challenge is to keep each newborn calf alive.

Each new generation of calves should be genetically superior and have the ability to outproduce their dams by at least 300 pounds of milk per year. That alone is worth over \$40 per lactation. Add to that, the increased value of their genetically superior offspring

Each new calf is valuable for the potential it possesses. But remember, a dead calf can never develop into a good cow. Thus, the more well-bred, genetically superior calves you can raise, the more good heifers you'll have to select from when upgrading your herd.

Hopefully, you'll also have a few good cattle left over to sell as breeding stock. In other words, you'll probably be able to start doing some selective culling as opposed to forced culling — and that makes a big difference.

Protect Your Future

There is much more to raising heifers than merely keeping them alive. Your heifers are your cows of the future — your future business.

I have yet to see a good cow which did not have a healthy set of lungs, a good digestive tract, a strong set of feet and legs, a sound udder and a healthy reproductive tract. All of these parts are essential to a good cow, and all of them are vulnerable to damage.

Some of this damage occurs early in her life. For example, calfhood pneumonia can scar a calf's lungs for life. This could seriously impair her ability to produce milk and lower her resistance to diseases and infections. That is not the kind of cow I would want in my herd.

Similarly, a severe infestation of intestinal worms can scar the

delicate lining of a calf's digestive tract. This could permanently reduce her ability to efficiently convert feed into milk.

A heifer foundered early in her life because of improper feeding, can experience foot problems for life.

Poor nutrition can also stunt a heifer's growth and impair her ability to produce. Nutrition is also closely related to reproduction, and complications at calving time can predispose heifers to uterine infections. The same can be said of unsanitary conditions and the use of infected herd sires.

Recently, I was on a farm where a large percentage of first-calf heifers freshened with mastitis. Even though it was not observed, we suspected these heifers were sucked as calves.

In this case, all infected heifers had one thing in common, at one time or another, all of them had been penned with a small group of heifers that had been raised together from weaning to calving, one of them was probably a "sucker".

This can result in permanent damage to the udder.

These are only a few examples of things that can happen to heifers, injuries which may affect them for life. It puts a lid on their ability to produce, no matter how well we care for them as cows.

These affected heifers develop into cows that perform about as

poorly as a tractor that is misfiring on several cylinders. However, there is one important difference.

You can replace a set of plugs on a tractor, but when is the last time you replaced a cow's lungs, her feet and legs, or her udder?

A cow has but one body, and it has to last her for life — and that life starts when she is a calf.

How well a cow performs on the outside depends on how well she is on the inside, and a lot of that is determined by how we have bred her, and how well we have cared for her from calfhood through maturity.

Md. offers beekeeper course

COLLEGE PARK The 23rd Annual Short Course for Beginning Beekeepers is scheduled for May 1 and 2. The session will be held at the aptly on the University of Maryland's College Park campus.

The University will be offering an intermediate level course during March. The workshops will be held each Tuesday evening of the month at the same location.

For more information, contact David J. Turm or Milt Nelson at the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, Room 0119 Symons Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, phone 301/404-3622.

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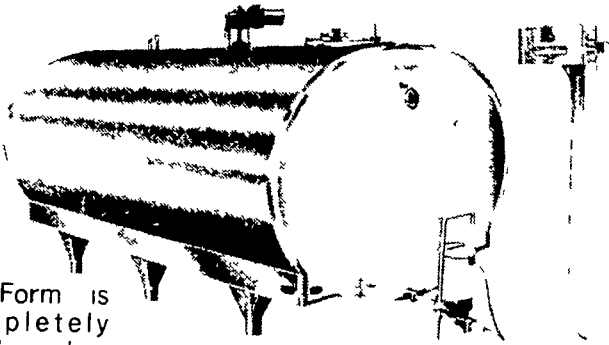
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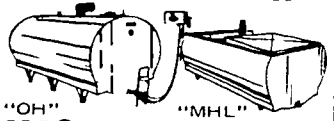
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