

Dairy Pipeline

(Continued from Page D10)

Dairy Farm Business Analysis Summary, for herds of 50 to 70 cows, as my initial guideline. I adjusted these for different levels of production and for \$12.50 milk prices. I also assumed it cost a \$1,000 to raise a calf to a freshening age of 24 months.

These figures will not apply to any single farm situation. So, use your own figures for greater accuracy. It is the relationship of lifetime profits to longevity and production that I want to illustrate.

At the lower level of production, a heifer never starts earning a profit until mid-way through her third lactation. More productive heifers may start turning a profit near the end of their second lactation. The amount of time required will vary with milk prices, production level and production costs.

Look at the effect of longevity on lifetime profits and profit per year

of life. Lifetime profits (and herd profits) can be doubled by increasing longevity from 3 lactations to 4. They can be doubled again by increasing it from 4 lactations to 6. This is due to at least four reasons:

➤ Once a heifer's rearing costs have been paid for, each additional lactation becomes a profit-making lactation.

➤ Production and profit per lactation increase with maturity, as the figures above illustrate.

➤ The greater the longevity, the less the culling rate, and the fewer replacements you need. That reduces replacement costs per lactation - from \$333 per lactation with a 33 percent cull rate to \$200 per lactation at a cull rate of 20 percent; that's \$133 more profit per lactation.

➤ Because you need fewer replacements, and because you now have more heifers to choose from, you can cull more selectively

and upgrade you herd at a more rapid rate.

As you strive to improve longevity, determine what it is that causes your good cows to depart from the herd too soon. Then, focus your efforts on correcting these problems.

Production

Low production is one reason for culling cows. A 1,000-pound increase in production can net you about \$80 to help offset a 50-cent deduction. At \$12.50 per one-hundred pounds, 1,000 pounds of milk generates \$125 more income. Deduct \$45 for extra feed and other expenses and you have a net of \$80.

Mastitis

Dairy producers are said to be losing \$180-\$200 per cow per year as a result of mastitis infections. The biggest loss is in the form of lost milk production, a loss you never see - just feel. Reducing your present cell counts by slightly more than one half can help you make up a 50-cent loss in milk price.

Let's look at some milk loss figures from research studies performed on thousands of cows, and assign some values to these losses.

Add to these losses, the cost of drugs and veterinarians, dumped milk, and premature culling. Ask you Extension agent for a Penn State list of 14 Steps to Control Mastitis.

Reproduction

Every day a cow stays open beyond the time she should be bred could be costing you \$3-4 per day. It may cost you \$2 per day to feed and house her, plus you're losing \$1-2 profit because she's not milking. Reducing long calving intervals by 3 to 4 weeks can help make up for a 50-cent decline in milk price.

So, be sure to feed cows properly and keep them healthy so they will cycle properly, show strong heats and conceive better. Also, observe cows frequently for heat, and breed them at the proper time. Check your semen quality and inseminating techniques. Keep cows free of infections and diseases and avoid other stresses

that interfere with conception.

Injuries


Injuries cause too many good cows to leave too many herds too soon. Prevent slippery concrete surfaces, repair stalls, gather up debris, give cows an occasional reprieve from the stress of constantly being on concrete, breed for soundness, prevent foot problems by proper feeding, hoof trimming, and by keeping cows out of wet areas.

None of these ideas require much, if any, capital. Nor do they require any herd expansions. If you are already doing a good job in these areas, then maybe more cows is the answer for you.

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