



The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

Crop System Arithmetic
Just thinking about the Good Ole' one-room school days stirs a lot of memories. Ira Shaw, my first teacher, presided over the local Schoolhouse known then as Hickory Grove. Ira must have taken the name of the school literally because he always kept a stout hickory switch handy, which had a substantial effect on the learning process.

I learned my arithmetic more to the fear of, than to the beat of the switch. The scars of learning are therefore in my head instead of the other end. Math was never a favorite subject, but it is one that

must be given its' due respect in today's Business, which relies mightily on number crunchers.

Almost everything we do can be related to numbers. The size of the Mortgage, the acres in the farm, the cows in the herd, even the strength of the stand of corn we just planted can be counted and judged as heavy or thin. Calculations enter into nearly every serious decision we make, from counting calories down to balancing the checkbook.

But sometimes we just like to make some of our farming decisions off the cuff, without bothering to figure the odds of

making life easier or more profitable. Hang the consequences! It's often easier to make a decision based on past experience, rather than go through the painful process of gathering and juggling figures to prove a sound outcome.

Cows, Corn and Computers

If your herd is on DHIA or some other sound testing program, numbers are already there to haunt, hinder or help. The heavy calculating is already done for you, and all you have to do is put it to work. But there are other phases of

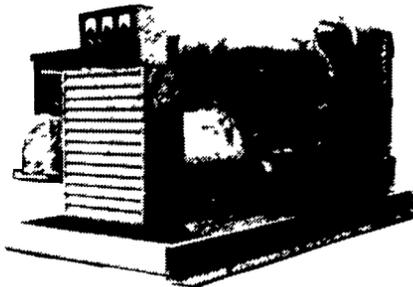
the farm business that run by "guess and by golly". Take the cropping system for example. Who bothers to really calculate the returns from growing corn? Or alfalfa, or soybeans, or wheat?

For your particular business, there is an optimum system of crops as well as an optimum system of breeding, feeding, marketing and milk production. It should be just as important to the welfare of the Dairy Business to know and control crop costs and returns as it is to know and use milk production records.

From farm to farm and season to season the variables that affect crop costs are great. But by applying the known average costs for various inputs such as fertilizer, seed, sprays and machine hire, very close comparisons can be made between the production cost of corn, beans, alfalfa and other agronomic crops. Cost of production must be balanced against yields and total value of the crop in question. The bottom line must always be related to the

(Turn to Page D29)

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