



Dairy Pipeline

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home to haunt you and your herd; that's a double whammie!

Buying herd replacements can be very beneficial, especially where land and feeds are scarce. On small acreage, you need milk to generate cash flow. That means raising more cows, better cows and fewer heifers — and fewer long-term dry cows. There is also a greater, quicker return on dollars spent for expensive feeds that are fed to good milking cows, as compared to feeds fed to heifers and long-term dry cows.

Once you have established a good herd, the benefits of buying replacements may not be as great for several reasons. The kind of replacements you need for maintaining a higher herd average are more expensive. Secondly, you have more to lose if a herd health problem should arise: your cattle are more valuable; income from the sale of valuable breeding stock may decline. On the other hand, if you have a good herd, merchandising cattle can be a good way to boost income as well as introduce new genetic material into the herd.

The benefits of buying herd replacements has to be weighed

against the risk of bringing in herd health problems. These risks can be minimized if you take a few precautions.

1. Buy from reputable people.
2. Before you buy a cow consider why that cow is being sold. Then think of all the cows you sell from your herd, and why you sold them. Would you want to buy them back? Let's be sure we are not just swapping one problem for another — possibly even a greater problem!
3. Know the health status of the cows you are buying and the herd they came from, and what they may have been exposed to (diseases, stresses, etc.) from the time they left their "old" herd until they arrive at your farm.
4. Discuss with your veterinarian what immunizations you need to perform on your herd to protect them from "outside" cattle, or how to treat cattle that have become infected.
5. Also discuss what immunizations purchased cattle might need to have before they are introduced into your herd. See if the cattle to be purchased have been so immunized, and if not, whether they can be before delivery.
6. Have an isolation barn where purchased cattle can be observed for about two weeks before being introduced to the herd. This will also give you some time to take cultures and run any tests you or your veterinarian deem necessary. When you are buying replacements, remember that non-lactating animals are easier to isolate than cows that are in production.
7. Reduce stress on purchased animals, and on the herd they are coming into. If possible, try to avoid buying and transporting cattle during inclement weather,

and during seasons when great fluctuations occur between daytime and nighttime temperatures.

8. Until you know a purchased cow is free of mastitis, milk her last, to avoid the risk of spreading infection to other cows.
9. Similarly, until you know she is free of any reproductive infections, avoid using your herd bull on the purchased cow. You don't want him spreading any infection to other cattle in the herd.
10. Practice strict sanitation as you visit each other in the process of buying and selling cattle. Remember, we can carry cattle disease organisms. Wear boots. Clean them and disinfect them. Stay out of feed alleys. Change boots and clothing.
11. Keep the barn well ventilated. Frequent changes of air also remove germ-laden, moisture droplets. This is very beneficial in keeping respiratory problems to a minimum.

I realize I've listed a lot of precautions, and that it may not be practical to do all of them. But it is something to think about. While there is a lot to be said for maintaining closed herds, there is also a lot of benefit in buying and selling cattle. The important thing is to know what you are doing; know the risks and take efforts to minimize them.

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Don't Buy Costly Problems
When you experience problems in a dairy herd, they can be very expensive, and added expense is one thing that most farmers can do without these days! These problems may appear in the form of: reproductive failure, mastitis, respiratory ailments, Johnes, etc.

to maintain a closed herd and enforce strict visitation rules. Immunization, good sanitation, good ventilation and a general reduction of stress in animals is a big help, too.

Experiencing these problems can be a very costly, sad experience. What's even sadder is when you pay money to buy outside cattle that bring these problems

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