



Brockett's Ag Advice

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DHIA: An Exciting Future

DHIA

DHIA has been part of the dairy picture for well over 50 years. It is difficult to picture how the dairy industry would have become as viable as it is without the use of that valuable program. It started as a management tool for dairymen who were interested in developing better cattle, doing a more efficient job of feeding dairy cattle, improving butterfat test, and increasing per-cow production.

I can remember when it was first computerized in Pennsylvania in 1956. That was the year I started in Potter County as an assistant county agent. The first day I walked into the office the county agent told me there are two programs that are all yours. I do not want you to bother me with them. They are 4-H and DHIA. Of course he also gave me a few other responsibilities and jobs, but those turned out to be the two plums that helped me to progress in my job with extension.

While I was part of the Potter County staff, the county DHIA program had its 50th birthday. It was fun to go back over the records and see what had happened to the progress of the program. I also had the privilege of interviewing two of the first testers for the county (Cleon Buck who became a premier Holstein breeder and Phil Thomas who became one of the first managers of the local Farm Credit Association). They had several stories about the early days of DHIA. When they started, cars were scarce and the prevailing method of transportation was by way of horse and buggy. Sometimes the horse and buggy was loaded onto a train car when the tester was traveling from one part of the county to another. In those days, the testers literally lived with the families for whom they worked. Even in the 50's the

testers often roomed and ate with their clients.

What a change some of those oldtimers would see if they became testers for the modern program. The one thing many of them would say was missing would be the use of the tester as part of the management team. This was one of the items most of the early testers, with whom I talked, stressed. They said they, as testers, often spent time with the dairyman discussing bulls, feeding, and culling. Of course there were no computerized reports or records. However, reports were often completed and left at the farm on test day.

They would also be amazed at the way milk is tested today. No more acid eaten clothes. No more hauling around bulky centrifuges or hand cranked calculators, in themselves an improvement over

the original pencil and paper. No more running samples in freezing weather with fingers so cold they could hardly hold a pencil. Today all samples are run at a central lab under controlled temperature using electronics instead of acid. In addition, the test provides fat, protein, and milk sugar readings in a matter of seconds rather than the hours it used to take to just get fat tests. Another machine reads the somatic cell count. Up until recently the technology of DHIA has moved light years ahead of the DHIA reports provided to the farmers. The result has been a program that was primarily a production reporting tool.

Now, due to some forward thinking dairymen who have become DHIA directors, the state association has begun to develop a

reporting system to match its technical program. If the reports progress at the pace projected, Pennsylvania dairymen will once again have a superior management tool that should help them remain among the nations most efficient and progressive dairy business men and women.

The future of the program in Pennsylvania appears to be bright and exciting. It should be as valuable for the completely commercial operator as for the registered breeder. Future reports may feature a management page that will include such goodies as a feed program nucleus (more specific feed programs could be built from it), a projection of return above feed cost such as the present projected 305 day production level, a health report, a

breeding report, and a culling guide. This could help a dairyman make some major management decisions.

There will be other features that will be valuable, such as instant results. That means reports on test day instead of several days later. For a farmer with an on-farm computer, the results could be stored in the main frame under a code and retrieved by the on-farm computer at any time for any purpose. The possibilities for the dairyman interested in management are beyond the imagination of most dairymen today. With the forward thinking of most modern dairymen, the change in DHIA technology and use in the next five years will be as great as it has been in the last 50 years. What about information via satellite?

Deadline for Five-Acre Corn Club Signup is July 1

UNIVERSITY PARK - Corn producers wishing to enter the Five-Acre Corn Club, sponsored by The Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service and the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association, should file an official entry form at their county extension office no later than July 1.

Any farmer or farm operator who is 18 years of age or older by August 1, 1986 is eligible to enroll. "There is no charge for entering the Corn Club," says Dr. Joseph H.

McGahan, extension agronomist at Penn State. However, farmers are encouraged to become members of the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association. Only one entry is allowed per farmer or farm operator.

To qualify, a field must be five acres or more and a complete Penn State soil test must have been taken within the last two years. A current-year soil test must be dated on or before May 1. If the corn is grown in contour strips, two to three strips on the same slope

may be used as long as the combined acreage is five acres or more. A cost-of-production budget will be available as an option for club members.

"The entire acreage must be planted in one variety of corn," says McGahan. Irrigated fields can be entered in the new irrigated class.

More information on the Five-Acre Corn Club is available from your county extension office.

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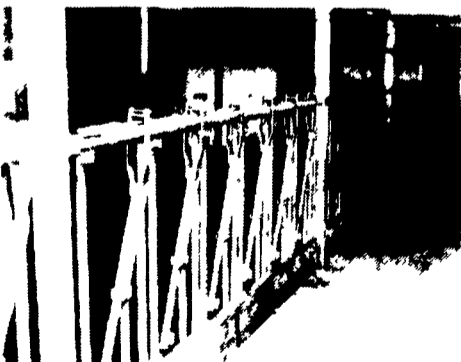
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