

The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

Heifer Heat Detection

A significant study on the effects of feeding schedules on heat detection was published several years ago. The study was done at the Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland in 1983. It is worthy of attention, not because of the awakening we have recently had by the Irish dairy in Georgia, but because it points out a very usable principle for us all.

When fed their grain in the morning, as many of us just naturally do, it was found that most of the heat activity occurred at night, between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. We seldom are inclined to observe the heifers for heat at that time of day. The secret seems to lie in when the grain is fed.

Maybe one of the reasons we too often rely on a young bull to breed the heifers is because they are too hard to observe in heat. Heifers are somewhat quieter than older cows and therefore harder to see in heat. If it occurs at night, or when we are not inclined to look closely for it, heats are easily missed.

The study done by the Irish researchers found that simply by changing the time of day that grain or concentrates are fed to heifers, will affect the time of day that most heats are observed. When grain is fed in the evening, more than twice as many heats were easily detected. This increase in detected heats is because the heifers were more obviously active during the daylight hours, when someone was around to see it.

As reported in Hoards Dairyman, July 25, 1983, there were 106 heats observed when grain was fed in the evening, against only 32 heats observed when the grain was fed in the morning. These heats were observed between 6 a.m. and noon. Between noon and 6 p.m. there

were 107 heats observed after evening feeding, compared to only 56 observed after morning feeding. The average is more than two-to-one in favor of evening feeding.

It doesn't necessarily mean that the heifers don't come in heat when fed in the morning. They are just more active at an inconvenient time of day for observation.

Who wants to spend the night in the heifer barn, looking for heats? Unless we install a TV monitor in the heifer barn, and watch for heats from the living room sofa few people are willing to spend their evenings in this practice.

It shouldn't be too hard to change the heifer feeding routine from morning to evening. If we can double the number of heats observed, and consequently get a few more heifers bred on time, the change will be worthwhile.

Since the study was done by unbiased research, using randomly selected heifers of mixed breeds, the effect of feeding time on estrus observation does not seem to be genetic or breed related. It might be worth a change in feeding time, if you are having trouble catching heifers in heat, just because of off-time activity.



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30 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

— Although some scattered parts of Lancaster county are dry, hot weather has brought corn and tomatoes right along according to associate county agent Harry S. Sloat. Hay making is generally in full swing. Cherry picking is underway. And combining of barley started Tuesday.

— July 1 will be the official transfer date of the new Pennsylvania State University experimental farm north of Landisville. On Tuesday some 20 persons toured small grain plots and heard reports from experts in the field.

— Thirteen steers died early last week on the farm of Lester High, R1 Denver, on a pasture that had been sprayed earlier with a weed

killer. Harry S. Sloat, Associate Lancaster County Agricultural Agent warns that sprays such as this can be dangerous up to two months and much care must be used to prevent livestock from coming in contact with the vegetation where chemical residue remains.

— An increase of 26 percent in the number of chicks turned out by commercial hatcheries in Pennsylvania during May compared with the same month last year was announced today by the State Department of Agriculture. About half of the May hatch of 10,057,000 chicks went to the increasing broiler-fryer trade according to federal and state surveys.



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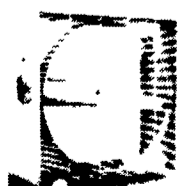
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