

Reproductive Management Tools Can Net Higher Profits

BY MARJORIE KEEN
Chester Co. Correspondent

SADBURYVILLE — Dairy farmers can increase their profits by adopting the latest reproductive management techniques. Cowside hormone testing and herd reproductive records are tools "you can use right now on the farm," Dr. Michael O'Connor, Penn State dairy extension specialist, told Chester County Dairy Day participants Feb. 26 at Sadsburyville.

For the greatest profitability the farmer's goal should be to achieve a calving interval of 12.5 to 12.8 months. Estrous detection through the milk-monitoring Progesterone Enzyme Ammuoassay should help with the 75-day conception goal.

According to O'Connor, the progesterone test is more accurate for heat detection than for pregnancy determination. It has proven 94 to 100 percent accurate in open diagnosis but only 65 to 85 percent reliable in showing pregnancy because conditions such as embryo mortality or uterine infection can cause a similar reading.

The test indicates heat because

progesterone is low when estrogen is high. With one of about eight testing kits on the market a farmer can more accurately determine when to breed each cow. O'Connor suggested choosing a five minute test that includes tubes or bags for collecting samples. If samples are stored in the refrigerator, costs will be reduced by testing several with one kit, he said.

Additional suggestions are to use composite samples or last stripplings, avoid infected quarters and check results carefully. Penn State found that milkfat variations did not affect results.

Another current reproductive tool is the prostaglandin injection followed by 80-hour appointment breeding. Benefits are fewer days open, efficient heat detection, less semen used and the advantages associated with more frequent veterinary exams. To be cost effective, O'Connor said, prostaglandin will have to be less than \$3 per dose.

Not available yet are the more accurate L.H. test, indicating the exact time to breed, and Protein B, accurately diagnosing pregnancy, stated O'Connor.

O'Connor showed the audience

how careful record-keeping can help diagnose potential problems in a herd. He observed that the essentials of a good system are that it be easily understood, easily updated and accessible to all employees.

Chester County Dairy Agent David Swartz said both quantity and quality of water are important for the dairy herd. A five month-old calf needs four gallons of water daily; a lactating cow giving 100 pounds of milk needs 55 gallons. The system supplying the animals should have 20-pounds pressure and 15 gallons per minute flow rate.

Where herd problems exist water quality must be considered. Swartz recommended obtaining a list of testing laboratories from the Extension Office and first having the supply tested for pH, Nitrates, total bacteria and total coliform. The second step is to check to see if sewage or manure is contaminating the water. Check in different seasons before investing in a new system, Swartz advised.

The most expensive tests are for toxic metals, such as lead and mercury, and for fuel and pesticides. Swartz cautioned the



Dr. Michael O'Connor (left) and Dr. Larry Jenkins were the featured speakers at the recent Chester County Dairy Day.

dairy families to choose a laboratory that does not also sell equipment.

Dr. Larry Jenkins, Penn State farm management extension specialist, outlined income tax changes affecting the farm family.


Jenkins also emphasized the need for good records as the foundation of financial management.

"The only way to enjoy your farm as a way of life," said Jenkins, "is to treat it as a business."

Atlantic Dairy District 18 Sets Meeting


SOUTHAMPTON — The Juniata Local of Atlantic Dairy Cooperative District 18 will hold its annual dinner meeting March 10 at 7 p.m. at Zimmies Diner, Mit-

flintown. Larry R. Noss, Juniata Local president, will conduct the meeting. William H. Bradford, District 18 director, will report on cooperative business.



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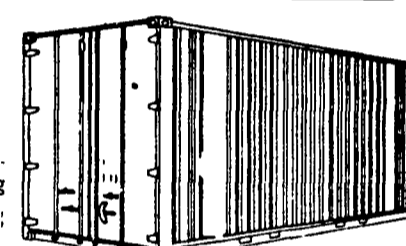
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