

Dairy Herd Replacement

(Continued from Page A1)
can and should begin by selecting which cows should be bred and which cows should not be bred. So there is no quick and easy formula. There are no magic numbers. Much of the decision to cull depends upon the quality of the stock available to replace it. To continuously improve the production and to achieve uniformity throughout the herd the operator must have consistently better replacements.

The future of the dairy herd and consequently the dairy farm itself depends upon the quality of the herd replacements. The goal is quite obvious. However, the right program to achieve this goal is not so obvious. And all this must be done while keeping costs down.

There are many factors in a dairy herd replacement program to be considered. And each factor must be looked at for economy, value to the program and suitability to the individual farming operation. As in any farming operation, what works for one farmer may not work for another. And also, the only way a herd replacement program, or any program will work is that it must be followed. Although well-intentioned, a program will fail if it is one that asks more than the operator can give in time, money, and labor.

PRIORITIES

"Your best genetic material are the just born calves and they deserve the same best management practices and attention because they will be your best cows in the future," said Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent.

"One problem is that the farmer may be inclined to pay attention to the critters which are paying the bills and may tend to overlook the need and value for proper care of the young livestock and may short change them on management," adds Shirk.

That concept is not news to any dairy farmer. However, although farm production has increased over the past decade the work force has not. Already stretched to capacity any labor intensive project must be scrutinized for its positive values.

"Considering the technical complexities, the work, the size of farms, the labor force has not doubled. When is enough work enough?", asks Shirk.

The program for raising young stock for herd replacement, must be one that blends well with the rest of the production concerns and neither deters good management practices nor consumes the time and energy of the owner.

What Works For Some

For as many different farms, there are as many different heifer raising programs. And for all topics ideas and opinions are diffe-

rent. What works for some, may not work for others. And while some programs may be very successful, the operator finds it difficult to pinpoint why. Throughout the series of articles the herd replacement programs of several dairy farmers will be discussed. Each farm is different and each program is tailored to meet the individual needs and limitations of that farm.

Peter Witmer, and his parents Raymond and Louise Witmer, operate the Penn-Del Farms, of Willow Street, and raise all their own replacements for their 60-plus head milking herd of Guernseys. Calves and heifers number nearly 50 head.

For the most part Peter is satisfied with his herd replacement program, but there are some parts he would like to change. However, he is quick to point out that the Witmer family has been raising their own replacements basically the same way for 17 years and it works.

Helene Dreisbach of Hamburg in Berks County, operates the dairy portion of Long Meadow Farms, with approximately 100 milking Jerseys, and raise all their own replacements. Dr. Robert Dreisbach, DVM, handles the nutritional needs of the dairy herd and work is shared by all including Patty, the Dreisbach's daughter and her husband Todd. Todd recently added 16 milking Jerseys of his own from his North Carolina herd to the Dreisbach herd. In the past 15 years the Dreisbach's have experimented with nearly every facet of herd replacement. They now have a program with which they are receiving good results.

Kenneth Umble and his wife Marilyn, operate the Glen Valley Farm, in Atglen, Chester County. Glen Valley Farm is home to 110 head of Holsteins with a 60 head milking herd. They raise most of their own replacements and do some merchandising.

Mt. Ararat Farms near Port Deposit, Maryland, raises all their own replacements for the 200-head Guernsey farm. The young livestock are nearly half of that number and Nevin Kratz, Herd Manager, says they experience few problems in the heifer replacement program. Basically in the fifteen years he has been at Mt. Ararat, little has been changed and he hopes the success continues.

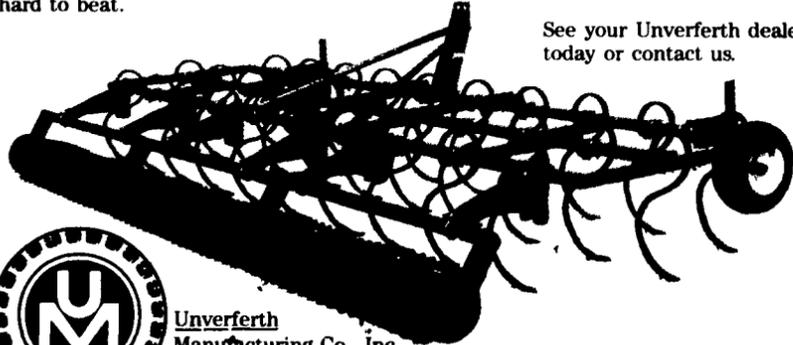
Components of a herd replacement program to be discussed:

- health
- nutrition
- isolation
- immunization
- ventilation
- management
- labor
- housing

(Turn to Page A27)

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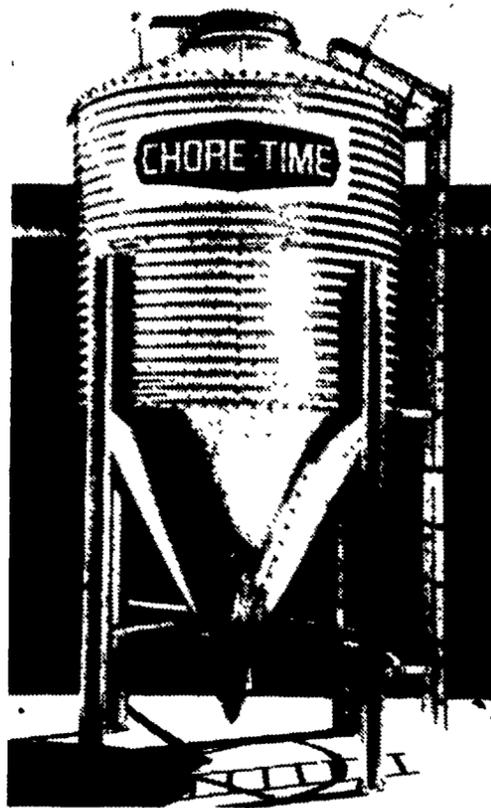
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