

# PSU Dairy Conference

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presentations.

"There are no guarantees to survival. Only dedicated dairymen will survive," stated Lawrence Muller, Professor of Dairy Science, as he opened the conference on Monday afternoon. The proper management must include both production and financial considerations, he went on to say. He told dairymen that decisions in the future must be based on economics, not emotions; on facts, not fiction.

Professor Muller based his comments of predictions that the milk price will go down, cost inputs will go up, and the profit margin per cow will go down. These, he said, are a certainty unless management skills are improved. Some predictions state that maybe 50 percent of dairymen will go out of business, he related. "I personally see the use of more experts or consultants in the future," he said.

On an upbeat note to lead to the rest of the presentations, Professor Muller concluded, "Dairying has the potential to be one of the most profitable of big businesses." He continued to remind dairymen that cost control measures must be strictly followed. "Follow the top, forget self-sufficiency, and know your costs," he cautioned. In dairy farming, profit must be the major goal, then satisfaction will come, Muller related. "If we do the little details all right, the big things will take care of themselves," he concluded.

### Assessing Costs And Benefits Of Dairy Feeding Programs

Richard Adams, Professor of Dairy Science, addressed the problems of dairy feeding programs and changing them in order to get more milk out of the dairy herd. His presentation included how to decide if a change is necessary and when would be the best time, complicating factors in making a change, and evaluating the addition of any additives or new feeds to the existing program of what is available on your farm.

"There are all kinds of technology that can make or break you," Adams began. "The important thing to consider," he cautioned dairymen, "is this making more milk?" he referred to the addition of new things to the feeding program. "Check for the economic response and one that is going to make you more money," he told dairymen.

Adams recommended the following approach to changing a feeding program:

1. Make certain your feeding and management are basically sound before trying new programs or feeds. Cows should be producing close to 600 pounds fat and have relatively few problems.

2. Obtain rations and management evaluations from several neutral sources.

3. Choose new programs or additives carefully. Weigh costs and projected returns carefully. Response on farms is variable and its often difficult to ascertain the same benefits advertised in claims made by manufacturers.

4. Whenever possible, run a trial under your own conditions. Choose a time when you have enough bunched calvings and few changes on your farm. Additional time may be needed to see effects on health and reproduction.

5. Compute results out to fat-corrected milk to obtain a better idea of differences. All responses are not necessarily economical.



Lou Moore, Penn State, presented an overview of the agricultural economy and a look at survival in the future with his presentation at the Conference banquet, Monday evening.

Assessment of costs of additives or new feeds is essential, to compute against extra milk income.

"It is no longer sufficient to depend on testimonials from neighbors and concerns involved, or even well-controlled research studies done at universities or by others," Adams cautioned. "These are things you must find out for yourself, under your own set of circumstances," he concluded.

### Considerations For Effective Health And Reproductive Management

The current economic climate has challenged dairy producers to manage their herds more efficiently. Maximum return from the input of labor, capital, and production costs is more important than ever. Too often reproductive efficiency is overlooked as a major area where efficiency of milk production can be increased. Milk yield per day of herd life is reduced with longer calving intervals. Cows spend more days in late lactation or more days dry. Fewer calves are born each year. Thus, there are fewer calves available as replacements or for merchandising. Voluntary culling for production is reduced as more cows are culled for reproductive reasons. Poor conception results in excessive semen costs, and use of bulls with lower genetic merit or even clean-up bulls. This retards genetic progress and production potential. Generally veterinary expenses increase as reproductive performance declines," Michael O'Connor, opened the next lecture.

"For the average Pennsylvania dairy herd it costs about two dollars per cow per day open over 90 days. This value varies depending on level of production, value of calves, semen price, veterinary expenses and replacement costs. This cost clearly indicates that reproductive management is an area requiring continual attention."

Professors Michael O'Connor and Lawrence Hutchinson addressed these issues and fielded many questions from the audience.

Failure to detect heats and inaccurate heat detection are still the major problems involved in poor reproductive performance, according to the professors. Many charts and data were shown from research conducted to substantiate areas needing improvement. O'Connor also addressed insemination.

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Professors from Penn State presenting the lectures included (left to right) Back row - Bill Heald, Larry Specht, Richard Adams, Terry Smith, Larry Muller, Front row - Joe Hlubik, Ross Farrow, and Michael O'Connor.

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