

FOCUS

Pennsylvania
Dairy Herd
Improvement Association

Call 1-800-DHI-TT ST for service or information

A.I. And DHIA — Partners In Progress

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General Manager, Select Sires

In 1950 there were 24 million dairy cows in the United States providing our nation's population with dairy products. Today, there are slightly more than 10 million cows, and they are feeding a U.S.A. population which has increased substantially since that time. Indeed, today's 10 million cows are producing considerably more total pounds of milk than 1950's 24 million cows did.

Why is this? Why are the American dairy farmers and their high-producing cows among our very best examples of U.S. productivity? There are many reasons, of course. They include advances in nutrition, housing and milking systems, fertilizers, weed control, and all the rest. However, I believe that two major resources, artificial insemination and production testing, working hand-in-hand, have played as big a role as any others.

These two practices have allowed dairymen to change the genetic makeup of their herds in a positive way. A.I. has contributed to the addition of new, profitable genes to the herd while DHIA has caused the elimination of less desirable, unprofitable genes from the herd. As a matter of fact, DHIA records have been the raw materials upon which we have been able to identify the genetically superior animals in an effort to increase the frequency in which they become parents. In other words, the utilization of DHIA records for genetic evaluations have been a by-product of DHIA testing.

What I really want to discuss, however, is the primary purpose of DHIA itself. When properly utilized, there is no better single resource available for making internal herd management decisions than DHIA records. Next to A.I., the most effective way of controlling the herd genetically is intelligent culling.

With today's sophisticated computers, DHIA can provide virtually any kind of management listings conceivable. Sometimes it may appear to be too much information, but each dairyman can pick and choose for himself which pieces of information he wants.

Sort Out the Profitable Cows

I would urge every dairy farmer who reads this article and is not on DHIA to seriously consider joining your local testing association. Today's dairy economic situation dictates that we must "breed to the best and cull the rest." We must be able to sort out our profitable cows from our "boarders." Some dairymen tell me that they can tell the difference between high and low production by "eyeballing" their cows and watching the pipeline at milking time. Well, I'm certainly no expert, never been asked to judge at Madison, etc., but I think I know a good cow when I see one. However, on any number of occasions, I have walked through

Average Farm Feed Costs For Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's this week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania. Remember these are averages so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

- Corn, No. 2y - 2.73
- Wheat, No. 2 - 3.68
- Barley, No. 3 - 1.94
- Oats, No. 2 - 1.56
- Soybeans, No. 1 - 5.31
- Old Ear Corn - 80.94
- New Ear Corn - 62.92
- Alfalfa Hay - 112
- Mixed Hay - 105
- Timothy Hay - 112

a herd, pointed to a cow and said, "I'll bet she's a good one." Then, to my surprise, the owner will turn and say, "She's not so hot." My standard answer to that is, "That's why you hire a DHIA tester!" The tester sorts out the real truth from what we think may be the truth.

That, in a nutshell, is what my message is really all about this

time. Today's dairying is competitive, and will become even more competitive during the decade of the 90's. We need to have both feet firmly planted on the ground and know precisely what each of our cows is contributing to the big picture. If you're not doing it already, hire a DHIA tester -- I'll bet you'll be glad you did.

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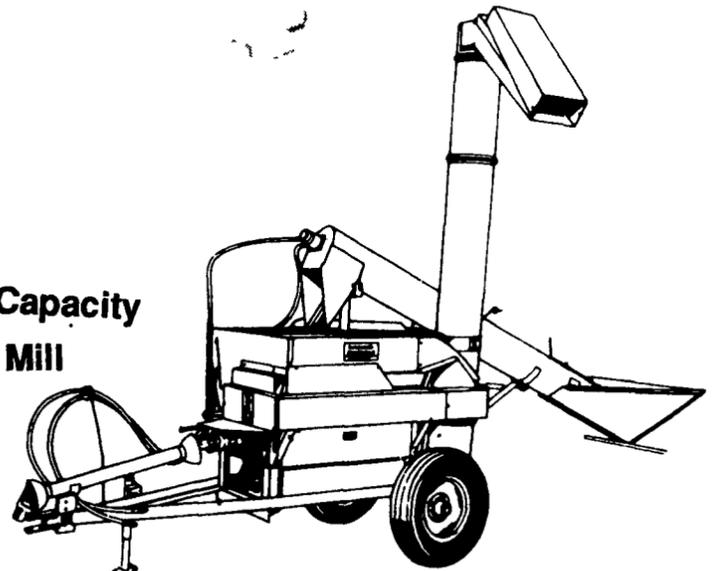
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