

FOCUS

Pennsylvania
Dairy Herd
Improvement Association

Call 1-800-DHI-TEST for service or information.

On The Record



Dick Barth
PA DHIA
General Mgr.

HURRY UP AND WAIT!

In my last article on reorganization we looked at inequitable service rates which are a major problem with DHIA's federated structure in Pennsylvania. This time, let's look at another problem, which is not quite as obvious, that reorganization of

DHIA can help solve.

Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows what it means to hurry up and wait. You hustle around to be somewhere on time only to get there and find a long line, so you wait. This characteristic is so much a part of the market climate in the U.S.S.R. that Soviets hire people just to wait in line for them to buy groceries or clothes. But, we don't have any such problems in DHIA. Such problems exist only in Communist countries, or in dictatorial organizations like the military service. Right?

Wrong. Time and again we find that dairymen have asked for DHIA services from their county associations only to be placed on a waiting list until one of the county's present supervisors has room on his testing circuit. If the farmer is lucky, he will be the last one needed to complete a circuit and a new supervisor will be hired. Or, someone will quit soon after the

farmer asks for service and there will be room to put him on test.

Supervisors continually confirm this situation exists in many places. When a member quits testing, that supervisor quickly finds a replacement who he has had in his "back pocket" for some time. How many are there in this "back pocket" statewide? Hard to say, but two per supervisor is a conservative average, and two times 246 is close to 500 farmers waiting to have some kind of record keeping system from DHIA. How long do they wait? We have no idea, but the length of time probably varies greatly from months to years.

SO WHAT?

So what, you ask. Why is that a concern? I waited to get testing services when I joined DHIA, why shouldn't everyone else?

We all know that DHIA is the only

authorized provider of official dairy cow records. But, because we are the only game in town we have an obligation to provide services to dairy farmers when they need it, not when it is convenient for us to provide it. That's a responsibility the association accepts as part of its membership in National DHIA. And that's a responsibility any good service organization lives up to.

However, it is understandable that local associations might resort to making new members wait. Adding a new testing circuit, especially a part-time one, is a hassle. Finding a new supervisor is difficult and time consuming- placing ads in the paper, interviewing candidates, discussing who to hire with the region manager and other board members- these are chores that volunteer board members who are busy with their own farms often don't have time for. So, you can't blame the local boards for not wanting to rock the boat.

Then too, there is the problem of how a new full-time employee with a part-time circuit will affect the cost of running the local association. How can a small association with one employee afford to carry a new second employee until he builds up a full-time circuit?

REORGANIZATION'S IMPACT

A statewide direct member association will help us be prepared to add new members all the time. By eliminating county line barriers for service purposes we will be able to assign full-time employees to

Feeding And Managing Dry Cows

BY JIM CLARK
McKean C. Dairy Agent

The most amazing aspect of being a Penn State Extension Agent is the wealth of information which overflows from my desk daily.

I arrived in McKean County in July of this year and have been running ever since. My past experience as a vocational-agriculture teacher in Penn Yan, New York and an extension agent in Bennington, Vermont, had prepared me for the varied agricultural questions which come into the McKean County Extension Office.

What is truly unique, is the quantity of resources and information available to residents of Pennsylvania from Penn State's College of Agriculture. One of those resources, available from your local Penn State Extension office, is a new free publication entitled *Feeding and Managing Dry Cows* prepared by A. J. Heinrichs, V. A. Ishler, and R.S. Adams.

As I read this publication I was reminded of a Vermont farmer who used to say he was so busy chasing the cows he didn't have time to fix the fences. Taking time to properly manage dry cows can help dairy farmers obtain maximum dry matter intake, good health, increased reproductive efficiency, and optimum milk production in the following lactation.

The dry period is necessary to allow the mammary gland to go through a normal period of involution and to ensure that the mammary cell numbers continue to multiply during early lactation. A short or absent dry period greatly reduces the number of secretory cells in the mammary gland.

Many studies show that cows dry 60 days give approximately 250 pounds more milk the following lactation, compared to cows dry fewer than 40 days which produce approximately 500 pounds less milk the following lactation. The reason for keeping dry periods close to 60 days is short dry periods do not allow enough time for mammary gland involution while long dry periods result in excess body condition.

The recommended production level for drying off ranges between 13 and 22 pounds of milk per cow per day. Reduction of feed is often a useful tool to reduce the quantity of milk produced. Ideally grain should be eliminated and a medium to low quality forage fed about a week before the dry-off day. This should sharply reduce the amount of milk secreted.

Cows should NOT be milked partially for several days as a means to dry off, because this increases flare ups of mastitis. The National Mastitis Council suggests dry treating all quarters from all cows with an approved long lasting dry treatment product.

In addition, a teat dip should be used and animals housed in a clean and well-bedded environment as the chance of new infection is high at this point. As with any health program you should work with your veterinarian to develop a program specific to your farm.

The main portion of the dry period is the time one week after drying off to two weeks before freshening. This is a time when the body condition of the cows should dictate the energy level of the diet being fed. (If body condition scoring is a new term for you, be sure to pick up extension circular 363 Body Condition

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