

High Producing Cow Analyzed

(Continued from Page A29)
higher producing herds are not only getting higher production, but they are managing reproduction," O'Conner said.

However, O'Conner said he can go back through the records and find the opposite trends indicated. "You can go through the literature and find anything you want . . .

"Inside the cow, from a reproductive standpoint, there are no differences," O'Conner said. He explained that the study cows had their average daily milk production recorded, up until 70th day, and then production was projected from those figures out to 305 days.

Also, the cows were monitored for levels of progesterone in the milk to determine when cows ovulated. According to O'Conner, the higher producers had no differences in ovulation.

"Equally, when the uterus and cervix returned to breeding shape, something called involution, there were no differences in timing," he said.

"Days to first heat, was variable, ranging from 69 to 77 days," O'Conner said of the study's

results. "Days to first breeding was exactly the same. And days not pregnant, 103 to 107. So, physiologically, there are no differences for reproduction.

"I'd like to dispel that concept that the cow not functioning properly reproductively is because it is giving too much milk," he said.

He quickly added, however, that geneticists' research over the years has seemed to show "that there is a slight negative relationship between production and fertility. It's slight, but it's real."

"It's difficult for you folks to select on the basis of fertility because the highest estimates of fertility inheritability are 10 percent and the most of the figures are 3 to 5 percent.

"So even if you could select for it, you wouldn't be gaining much. Remember, milk selection is on the order of 25 to 30 percent heritability," he said.

According to O'Conner, most of the problem with breeding after 90 days is an "awareness problem."

He said some people claim that cows with higher milk production have lower first service conception

rate, but that records and research shows that to be also a myth.

He also said that farmers apparently don't like to check heats.

He said that in studying the various adherences to the 21-day estrous cycle in cows, the heat detection methods used by farmers and the accuracy of heat detection and the success of conception on the first service of artificial insemination, there appears to be a supported conclusion: those who use stringent and rigorous heat detection methods are more apt to have better first service conceptions.

He also showed data that indicates that cows are more likely to come into heat before 6 a.m. and after 6 p.m., although the specific reason is not known. O'Conner said it could be that the cows are distracted during the day.

Nevertheless, O'Conner said that the study shows that most dairymen are missing the best time of the day to determine heat.

He said he suggests to those who desire an increase in conception rate and a lower calving interval to check their herds in the evening or first thing in the morning before

disturbing them.

O'Conner also had charts and graphs that showed that cows who were allowed on dirt where footing was sure and not slippery, showed a much higher incidence of reception to mounting.

He said good dirt conditions, or grooved cement could improve cow receptability and increase the probability of first service conception.

Cows with good body condition score (ideal weight and condition) also show better estrous activity, O'Conner said. Cows that are too fat will respond poorly and underweight cows respond poorly.

Other problems with conception rate includes cystic ovaries, uterine infections and other health problems, O'Conner said. He said overall herd health and environment will improve reproduction.

Postpartum exams done 25 to 30 days after freshening can help detect and then prevent such problems, O'Conner said.

Likewise, clean and healthy surroundings during calving can help prevent infections and disease and help lengthen the reproductive life

of a cow, in addition to helping increase calf survivability.

Charles Gardner DVM, with Willow Creek Animal Hospital, and a spokesman for Monsanto Corp., a manufacturer of BST, talked about herd health and how to better manage.

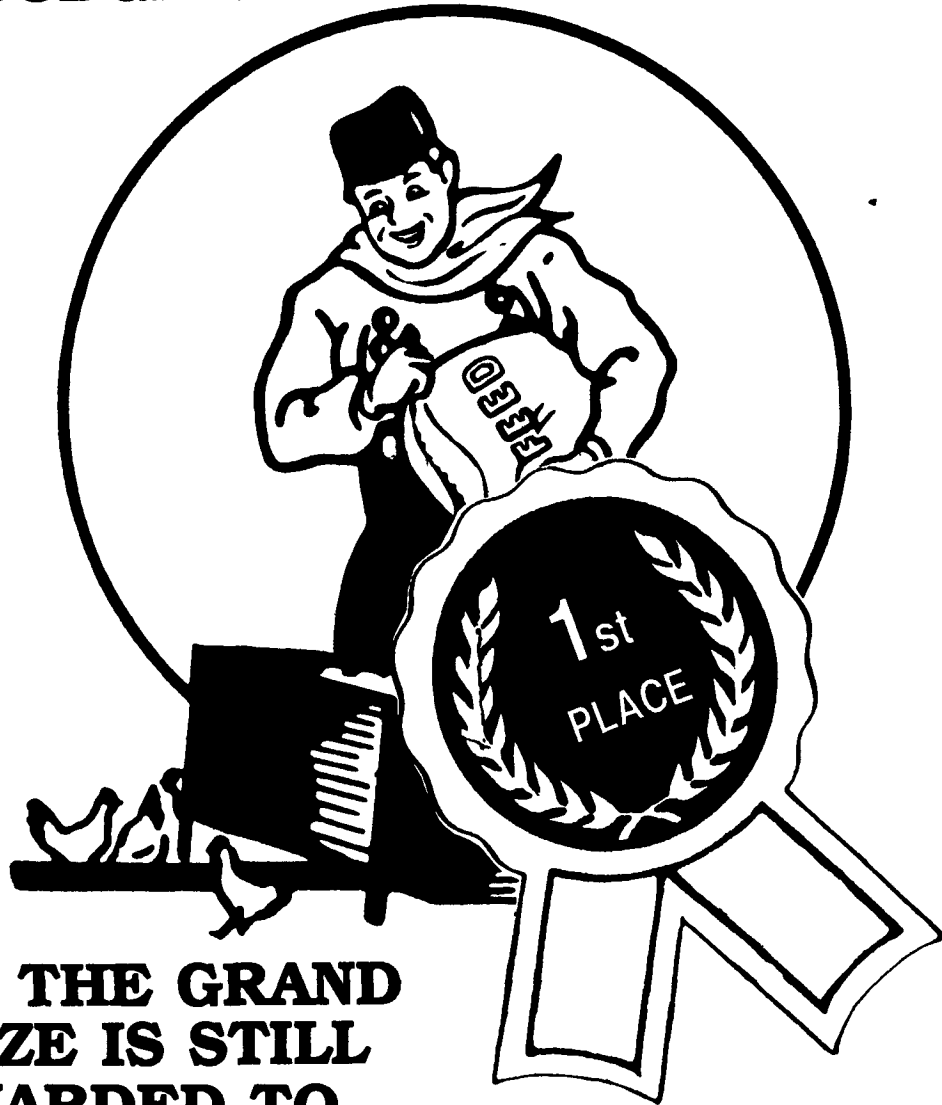
According to Gardner, he used to rely heavily on a computer to help manage dairy herds, but recently reverted to using colored pencils and graph paper to chart incidence of health problems within herds.

He said that, without charting, incidents of one to two retained placentas a month can seem insignificant.

But, through charting the actual cases over time and reviewing them in comparison to the actual herd activity, what at first seemed insignificant suddenly shows up as being 25 percent of the cows having problems during calving.

He said that rate was too high. But added that unless good records are kept on paper, and charted later, a serious problem can go undetected and the cause of the problem can continue,

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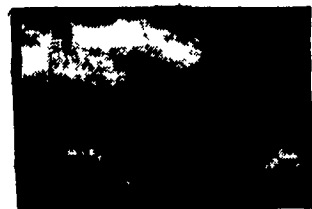
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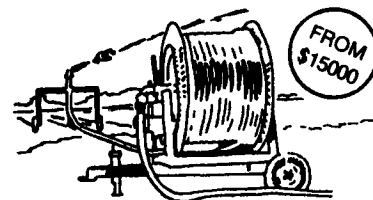
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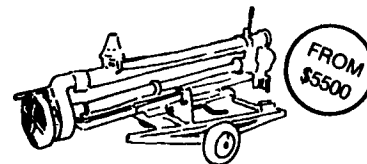
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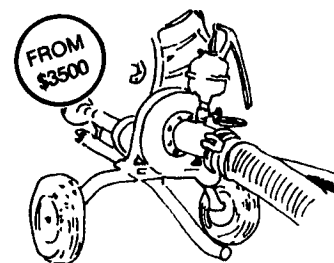
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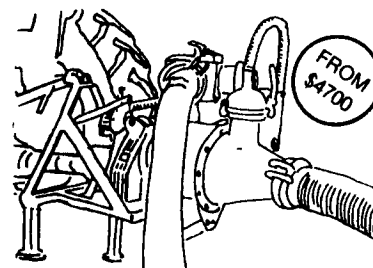
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