

Numbers Gain Or Numbers Game?

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Northampton Co. Agent

What came first? The chicken or the egg?

A similar question can be asked of DHIA members.

Which comes first? Do DHIA members herds produce more on average because they belong to DHIA? Or is it just that herds who would be above average any way are more likely to join DHIA?

This question came up during a discussion I had recently with a dairyman. I was trying to convince him to try DHIA.

I'd rate this dairyman among the better managers in our county. He has a good producing herd of cows based on his milk slips. I showed him the records proving DHIA member herds averaged several thousand more pounds of production per cow compared to non-DHIA herds. He argued that the numbers were "fixed."

"Look who belongs to DHIA in our county," he stated. He then listed 10 or 12 herds and argued they had the best land, best barns, best genetics and best management. They belonged to DHIA 100 percent.

Then he listed five or six of our less productive herds. They were 100 percent non-members.

"DHIA can't take the credit. It's just a number game. The 'good' herds belong for the prestige not for the records," he argued.

There is some truth in this dairyman's logic. Better managers are more prone to use the tools available to them and DHIA is one such tool. But it doesn't tell the whole story.

Imagine if we eliminated all DHIA programs for 5 years. If we compared the averages of the herds of those who had been members and those who were not, I'm sure there would still be a difference in favor of former members.

But (and here's the big "but") the difference wouldn't be as large as it is now.

To illustrate, let me share an example of a farmer with whom I worked.

I was a county agent in Lebanon County from 1976 to 1979. One herd I worked with then was one I'd call a top-managed herd. I worked with this herd many times.

Shortly after I came to the county he stopped DHIA testing. About two years after he quit, I got a call.

It was taking too long to milk his cows. He felt something was wrong with his milking system.

In 1976 I performed a milking routine check for the farmer. He averaged 5½ minutes per cow. Now, two years later, his time was more than 8 minutes per cow.

His pipeline system was okay. We traced part of the problem back to when he dropped DHIA. Then he knew exactly what each cow produced. Now he based his estimate on what he saw in the line.

Cows that took longer to milk were assumed to milk more. Fast-milking cows were culled. He'd been selecting for harder or longer milking cows, not more productive cows. We went back and checked his old DHIA records and he was surprised that he had culled many of his "good cows" based on the old records and kept some plain out "dogs" and considered them good cows today.

Even so, he still had a fairly productive herd. But we did a check of milk slips and found his average production had dropped over the two years.

I can't remember the exact numbers, but I remember it happened at a time the overall county rolling herd average was going up about 500 pounds of milk per year.

What did I learn from this experience?

This was a good herd and even without DHIA it remained a productive herd compared to the county average. However, without the DHIA records, the

Forage, Feed Analysis Available By Mail

BOB ORMSBY

Director of Member Training

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — On Sept. 1, Pa.DHIA began providing a full range of forage and feed analysis services through a joint agreement with the Northeast DHIA lab in Ithaca, N.Y.

This means that you can order service by mail from the N.E. DHIA lab for the same rates paid by NE DHIA members.

Your Pa. DHIA supervisor should be able to explain the service and to provide forage sample bags and order forms at no cost. This is a direct mail program and you will send your samples to the lab in Ithaca.

We are pleased to making this service available to you and if you need supplies or have any questions at all, feel free to call Pa. DHIA at 1-800-255-5344.

manager made mistakes that lowered the herd's performance.

It doesn't matter if the herd is average, in the top 20 percent, or the lowest 20 percent, the use of good production records makes a significant difference.

So what's the answer to the question I raised earlier?

Do herds get better when the owners are DHIA members or are owners of better herds more likely to join DHIA?

It's a combination of both.

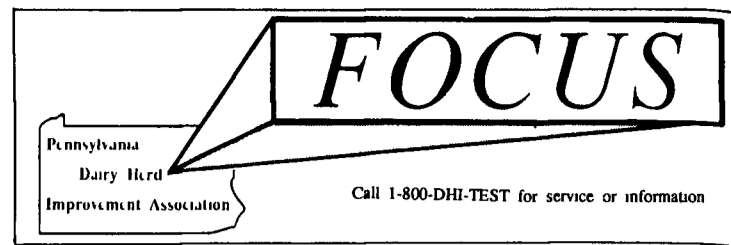
How Does Your Herd Compare?

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — This data is pulled from Pennsylvania DHIA's mainframe computer each week. It is a one-week summary representing approximately one-fourth of the herds on test, as they are tested monthly.

These data are valuable from a business management standpoint and can be used for comparing your operations to the averages from almost 1,400 herds across the state.

DHIA Averages for all herds processed between 11/19/90 and 11/26/90

Number of Herds Processed	1,341
Number of Cows Processed	77,210
Number of Cows Per Herd	57.5
Milk Per Cow (Lbs)	17,216
%-Fat	3.66
Fat Per Cow (Lbs)	630
%-Protein	3.18



Protein Per Cow (Lbs)	547
Average Days in Milk Per Cow	315
*Value for CWT Milk(\$)	14.78
*Value for CWT Grain(\$)	8.16
*Value for CWT Hay(\$)	4.35
*Value for CWT Silage(\$)	1.52
*Value for Pasture Per Day(\$)	.31
*Value for Milk Per Cow Per Year(\$)	2,545
*Feed Consumed Per Cow Per Year(Lbs)	
A: Grain	6,870
B: Hay	2,590
C: Silage	14,506
D: Day Pasture	65
*Feed Cost Per Cow Per Year(\$)	
A: Grain	561
B: Hay	112
C: Silage	221
D: Pasture	20
*Total Feed Cost Per Cow Per Year(\$)	916
*Income Over Feed Costs Per Year(\$)	1,629
*Grain to Milk Ratio	1:2.5
*Feed Cost Per CWT Milk(\$)	5.32
Avg Level For 1,086 SCC Herds	338,967
*Member generated figures	

HAIL, HIGH WINDS AND THE AGRONOMIST WHO DID MORE THAN SHOOT THE BREEZE.

It was the worst hailstorm to hit in years. And when it was over, cornfields had practically disappeared.

Pioneer agronomist Jerome Lensing got right to work, organizing meetings for anyone interested in discussing the damage. More than 100 farmers attended. Together they visited dozens of farms, cut open the corn stubs and made stand counts.

What Jerome told the farmers was surprising. Yes, the corn was beat up. Yes, it looked ugly. But no, there was absolutely no need to replant.

The corn had reached the fifth leaf stage and was about five inches tall when the hail beat it down to nothing. But the growing point was still below ground — and still white and healthy.

Pioneer could have sold a lot of corn to a lot of worried farmers that Memorial Day weekend. Instead, we sold them on the value of a good business partner. One whose goal is to help farmers grow corn more efficiently and more profitably.

Three weeks after the hailstorm, Jerome returned. And everybody wanted to buy him lunch.

OUR PLEDGE.

We pledge to provide products and services to increase the efficiency and profitability of America's farmers. We will continue breeding new hybrids with high yield potential — and with a balance of other key traits that give you the greatest potential for a successful crop. And that means more Earning Power for you. As a valued business partner, you have our commitment to delivering quality products and services. Our goal is your satisfaction.



PIONEER.
BRAND • SEED CORN

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