

Animal ID System Important

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mation. The greater the number of animals the less the herd manager can rely on memory to catch errors and missing information about each animal. Breeding, pregnancy checking, milk recording, drying cows off and culling, all rely on being able to tie consistently events to each animal. One of the most identification intensive jobs is using prostaglandin. Imagine using prostaglandin when there is a question about which cow is checked open, which cow was treated and of those treated, which cow did not come into heat?

There are a few simple ideas for setting up a solid ID system.

1) Make it consistent. Can more than one person on the farm determine what the identification of the next animal that enters the herd will be? The rules for assigning a new animal's identity should be simple enough for several people to apply with the same results.

2) Use numbers. Avoid using letters with numbers. Some day you may want to use an on-farm computer to manage your herd. Letters in the animals' ID makes it more difficult to apply software and slower to enter animals' identification when referring to an animal (you have to use the whole key board rather than just the numeric key pad).

3) Think of your calves and your milking herd as one. There should be no duplication between calves' and cows' identification. Avoid any system that can result with a calf the same number as a cow.

4) Have a unique number for

each cow. Rely on your records to store information. Systems that try to tell the animal's year of birth, dam, owner or source can cause real headaches when you try to stick to rules one through three.

5) Have a cross reference to each cow ID. Probably not on your farm, but on some farms, a cow could lose a tag.

6) A tag for every cow, a cow for every tag. Do not be afraid to retire a tag when a cow leaves the herd. Do not be afraid to throw a tag out. Reusing tags can cause problems that make any potential savings irrelevant. (Penny wise and pound foolish?).

7) Let the animals' identification be for life. Changing an animal's ID when she enters the milking herd can only cause extra work and extra confusion.

There is probably more than one way to accomplish all of the

above. Here is one way. The good news is this system works, (it is already used on many dairies) it is inexpensive and can be started quickly. It is easy to learn, remember, teach and continue for a long, long, time.

Get some National Standard Series ear tags. Contact DHIA for your tags. A case will likely hold a thousand tags and cost about seventy dollars. Buy two or three cases in a straight series. The numbers on each eartag will be made up of your state number, three letters and four numbers. If you currently have cows numbered up to 300, order your run to start at 0350 to 0400. The next animal that enters your herd, a calf or purchased milker will be assigned that number. Her metal eartag will be state number, three letters and 0350. Her plastic eartag will be 350. The next animal will

be number 351. By now you can probably see a pattern.

Do not be afraid of numbers in the thousands. This number inflation will not cost more, make it harder to remember or cause interest rates to go up. You will still think about your animals by picturing them in your head. Good

old 3225 will still be remembered as a miserable old stinker or one you wish your barn were full of.

Think about your ID system. The right system will pay dividends every day in the way that only the truly simple, good ideas can.



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