

Money Made Calving Heifers Early

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Many producers spend less time planning a herd replacement policy than the dollars and cents of this management issue justify.

Cows are culled to avoid trouble, control herd size, or meet cash needs said Bennett Cassell, dairy specialist at Virginia Tech.

Age at first freshening seems to just happen rather than being planned. Most estimates of rearing costs per heifer are well over \$1,000 and are higher for older heifers even with less costly inputs during growth.

With 35 percent culling, the number of replacement heifers re-

quired for a 100-cow herd increases from 70 if heifers freshen at 24 months to 105 for 36-month-old first calf heifers.

An average herd must keep 15 more heifers to freshen at 29 months of age compared to 24 months. The \$15,000 to \$18,000 those heifers cost would make a nice addition to most herds' incomes.

Recent research at Washington State University suggests freshening heifers even earlier than 24 months and providing a longer calving interval for additional growth and development after first calving.

It is easy to delay heifer freshening since rearing can be less in-

tensive; heifers are larger at freshening and thus compete better with mature cows, and their yields go up.

However, easier doesn't mean more profitable. Costs of delayed freshening outweigh the benefits and represent an opportunity for considerable savings to profit conscious dairy producers.

The Keys To Cow Cooperation

Chasing a wandering cow into a milking parlor or pushing an animal into a holding pen can be frustrating for a modern dairy producer.

With mechanized equipment and facilities, they have exceeded the technological expectations of

their predecessors. Yet each year, excessive time and energy is still spent physically moving dairy cows into the parlor.

Purdue University animal scientist Jack Albright has researched animal behavior techniques which, at a minimal cost, can reduce the physical requirements of moving livestock. These techniques also can increase the efficiency of the available dairy facilities, equipment, and human resources.

Albright said that through the proper training of cows and milking parlor operators, cows can be induced to cooperate within the system instead of being forced to conform.

He has identified several techniques to minimize the physical labor requirement and get the greatest number of cows in and out of the parlor in the shortest amount of time. The techniques are designed to maximize milk production and minimize employee stress and frustration.

Provide dairy cows with a consistent environment. Producers should use the same vocal commands at each milking and have gates open and ready for the cows to enter.

Music can add to a consistent, pleasant environment, benefiting both the milker and the cow. Music provides an environment which the cow becomes comfortable.

Retail Food Self-Inspection Program Begins

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has prepared a Retail Food Establishment Self-Inspection Program, according to Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff. The program is designed to supplement ongoing departmental inspection efforts and existing store programs.

Under the program, managers of retail food stores are given a five-page listing of items designed to ensure the safety of foods throughout their establishments. A sheet used to log refrigeration temperatures is also in the packet.

"This gives retail store managers an important inspection tool to assist in their established food safety programs," Wolff said. "Through the efforts of the Department and the retail industry, consumers are assured continued safety and quality of the food supply."

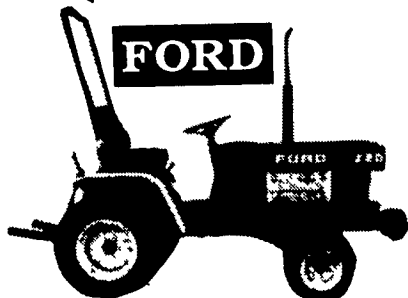
The inspection programs were mailed to 40 supermarket chains in early August. The program has been well received by the supermarkets and will be expanded to include independently owned food stores and convenience stores.



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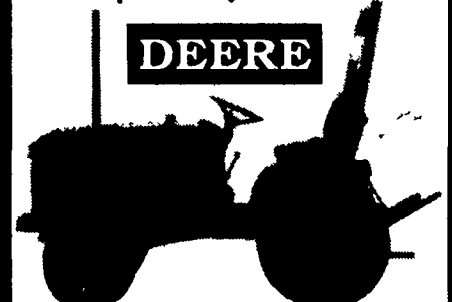
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