

**GLENN'S
UDDERINGS**

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Days To First Service And Days Open

This is the first of several columns about DHIA reproductive management reports. These reports are a valuable tool for evaluating the reproductive status of your herd, but for the data to be accurate you or your DHIA technician must enter all heat dates, all breeding dates and the results of all pregnancy checks.

What calving interval are you striving for? That establishes your goal for days open. If you are trying to maintain a 12.5 month calving interval, average days open has to be about 100 (12.5 months x 30.5 days per month - 281 days pregnant = 100 days open). That means some cows will have to conceive before 100 days to compensate for those that conceive later.

If your goal is to get cows settled by 100 days, how soon after calving should you start preparing them? Also, what is the earliest you want to start breeding them? We refer to this as the voluntary waiting period (vwp). You will find this figure on your Raleigh DHIA Herd Summary, a portion of which has been reproduced in Table 1. If you do not designate a vwp, Raleigh will automatically use 60 days.

If you want to start breeding cows 60 days after calving, preparations must start 2-4 weeks or more prior to that time. This includes: recording heat dates, managing cows' flesh, prostaglandin shots, repro checks, etc.

If your vwp is 60 days, the best average days to first service you can hope to attain is about 70 days - about 10 days more than the vwp. The reason for this is some cows will come in heat on day 61 and some 21 days later, with the average time being about 10 days, that is, if every cow came in heat and you detected all of the heats.

Table 1 shows Lancaster County's average for the month of May. Average days to first service was 93. With a vwp of 59 days, that's 24 days greater than what they were aiming for (93 days to first service - vwp of 59 days - 10 days to come into heat = 24 days). In other words, they already missed one heat period, even before the first service! This could have been intentional for some cows and accidental for others.

If their goal is a 12.5 month calving interval, cows must be pregnant by 100 days after calving, but they won't be confirmed pregnant until pregnancy checked. That means we can only have an average of 1.5 repeats or missed heats after the vwp (100 days open

Table 1 SUMMARY OF CURRENT BREEDING HERD

VOLUNTARY WAITING PERIOD (VWP)	TOTAL COWS IN BREEDING HERD	COWS WITH NO SERVICE DATES OR DIAG OPEN			DAYS OPEN AT LAST SERVICE				AVG. DAYS TO 1ST SERVICE
		OPEN VWP TO 100 DAYS	OPEN OVER 100 DAYS	NUMBER DIAG OPEN	FEWER THAN VWP	VWP TO 100 DAYS	OPEN 100 TO 130 DAYS	OPEN OVER 130 DAYS	
59	22	4	4		1	5	3	6	93
	% OF BREEDING HERD	18	18		5	23	14	22	

- vwp of 59 days - 10 days to come into heat/21 days per heat cycle = 1.5 heat periods).

On the Penna. DHIA reports, the average days to first service appears at the bottom of the Reproduction Management Report.

Table 1 is a summary of the breeding herd only — the cows you are trying to get bred and confirmed pregnant. For the Lancaster herds, this was an average of 22 cows. In the table, the breeding herd is divided into two groups: 1.) those awaiting first service, which includes cows that were pregnancy checked and confirmed not pregnant, and 2.) cows that have been bred but not yet pregnancy checked.

Of the 22 cows in the breeding herd, 8 were awaiting first service after calving or after having been confirmed not pregnant. Four of these are still within the normal 59-100 day period for first services. The other half (4 cows) already passed the normal period, and are starting to stretch the calving interval beyond 12.5 months.

Of the 22 cow breeding herd, 15 were serviced but not yet pregnancy checked. One was bred early, before 59 day vwp. Five were last bred in the normal 59-100 day period. Three were last bred 100-130 days after calving, and six were open more than 130 days at time of last breeding. In other words, 9 of the 15 last services (60%) were beyond the desired time! At 130 days, they are already at a 13.5 month calving interval (130 days + 281 days pregnant/30.5 days per month = 13.5 months). If repeats and missed heats continue to lengthen the days to last breeding, calving interval will also continue to increase.

Some Management Thoughts

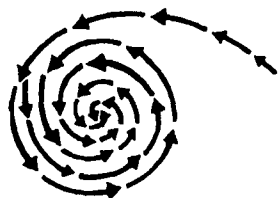
Let's come back to the question asked earlier, what calving interval should you strive for? A better question to ask is what should average days open be? Calving intervals indicate what has already happened, and you can't do anything to change it. Days open let you see trends as they develop, while you still have time to do something about them. They determine projected calving intervals.

If our goal is to have a projected calving interval of 12.5 months, our average Lancaster County DHIA herd is in trouble; their projected calving interval averages 13.5 months. Maybe your calving interval should be greater than 12.5 months, but be careful not to relax your calving interval so it matches your management level. Goals should challenge you, but they should also be reasonable.

One way to make your calving interval and days open look better is to cull your problem cows. They can get expensive especially if they are not worth much, or they are

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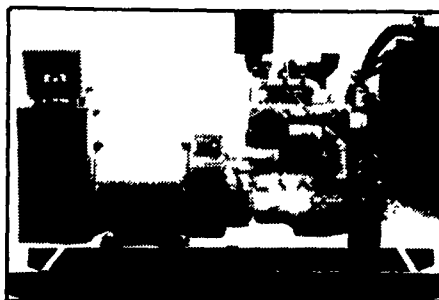
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