

FOCUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS & CUSTOMERS



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Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association
DHIA Service Center
Orchard Road, University Park, PA 16802

Lancaster Farming, Pages E-8 To E-10

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Where Are We Headed On DHIA Testing Costs?

DAVE SLUSSER
General Manager

As I ponder this broad question, many things come to mind. Our board and staff has given much thought and action recently on controlling cost, yet maintaining quality service to our members. We have cut back on staff, consolidated our office space, all to our Orchard Road Lab, and converted our lab technicians from university employees to PA DHIA employees. Yet in spite of this, we have maintained top scores in all facets of our service in our Quality Certification scores with National DHIA.

Now the next question! How can we maintain quality employees in the field, in our lab and in our processing center, and at the same time control or lower cost to our members? Some people say that cannot be done, however that

is not true. It can be done, but those steps involves our members expectations of service. I would like to answer these questions in three ways:

- 1.) What can members do now?
- 2.) What changes in National DHIA rules can be made for the future?
- 3.) Can we work together as brothers and sisters for the overall good of our dairy industry?

What Can Members Do Now?

Have you thought of A.M.-P.M. testing. Research has shown that the accuracy of this testing program is really good. I have yet to talk to a member who is on A.M.-P.M. who wants to go back to 2x testing. It saves the members time on test day and it allows the technicians to do two herds in one day. According to the cost analysis figures in front of me, 75% of your testing cost is personnel and travel time to the farm. At our

April board meeting, the board instructed management to move toward a uniform method of pricing throughout the territory. The cost of service must be more accurately expressed. Labor efficient records with electric ID, also spreads the cost of personnel out over more cows, yet still maintains official record status.

If you are not concerned about official records, we can provide many different programs such as Owner Sampler that will keep your cost down, yet give accurate management information.

All of the above suggestions will lower the cost to the member, yet can improve the income of our personnel.

What National DHIA Rules Can Be Changed?

Keep in mind the following suggestions are my own, and depend on National Rules

changes. What about offering a 45 day testing program in 2x or A.M.-P.M.? What about scheduling test day in your herd like you do herd health checks? Can you see management benefits to you? I believe that we need to develop programs for the members to improve their management decisions. We need to spend less time and money on enforcing DHIA rules. Legal fees are too high for the membership to bear just because of a very few people. **Can We Work Together?**

As you know the state boundaries are down, and states as well as counties within states are competing against each other. I know there are benefits to members, however I would like to share with you what is really happening. Different DHIA associations are working hard at stealing members from each other. The percentage of cows on test still remains about 50% of the cow population. This effort cost time and money, however it is not really putting more cows on test. If we could put more cows on test, our overhead cost per cow would decrease.

Two weeks ago, I spent two days visiting dairy herds in Craw-

ford County. I traveled with Jane Kashner, our technician in that area. We didn't take any herds from Crawford County DHIA, but we talked several herds into testing. One morning we got three herds in a row to test their cows on A.M.-P.M. test. DHIA didn't stand still those two days, we grew.

I believe that 60% of the cows could be on a DHIA testing program with very little effort, if that was our goal. The time and money spent trying to take members from each other is costing the dairy farmer money. Let's spend this time and money to enroll new herds. This change would take us from a loss situation to a winning one. I believe that Pennsylvanian's need to get back together again. I ask you as a dairy farmer to encourage your DHIA leadership to look at ways to work together.

Where Are We Headed On DHIA Testing Costs?

I believe we will get together again. I believe that we will enroll more cows on a testing program and provide a quality program at a reasonable, competitive cost well into the future. Will you help make this happen?

Changes In DHIA Genetic Information

Larry W. Specht
Professor of Dairy Science

Pa DHIA has upgraded the reporting of genetic evaluations for cows and heifers on the Herd Summary II and Individual Cow Page reports as well as on the Young Stock Listing (report of recent calvings and identification of calves) and on the Heifer

Management report. In many cases, information on the Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) of individual animals is not known. This can be due to errors or omissions in the identification of an animal and/or one or both of its parents. The best solution is to supply the correct identification and resubmit the animal production

data. This is not always possible and it is logical to

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