

Chester Dairy Day

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proper development of the heifer, especially reproductively.

He also suggested that breeding heifers to calve at 23 to 24 months of age should be a goal of every producer, because it results in higher lifetime milk production.

Heinrichs also said that there is no correlation between age of first calving and age of culling — which means that those who continue to have heifers calve at ages of 25 months on are merely losing money in feed costs.

If the heifer is going to have problems and be culled before a

third lactation, it is going to happen regardless of when she calved the first time.

What will happen with a heifer that calves at 23 to 24 months of age is that over her lifetime she will actually produce more milk, and she will be more profitable, because she won't require as much feed until she starts to generate income in milk sales.

According to an analysis of data taken from Dairy Herd Improvement Records, those cows which had an age of first calving at 22.9 months averaged 25,525 pounds of milk per 305-day lacta-

tion, while those calving first at 26.3 months had an average production of 20,280 pounds of milk.

Heinrichs recommended using a weight tape to start breeding cows when they weigh about 750 pounds. He said most people are breeding when the heifers weigh about 900 pounds, which is unnecessary.

The goal is to have a post-calving weight on a first-calf heifer of about 1,200 to 1,250 pounds. (For every increase in body weight at calving there is a corresponding increase in milk production).

Heinrichs warned that most weight tapes available need to be reworked, since the calculations upon which they are based are about 20 years old. He said weight tapes generally result in overesti-

mating by 20 pounds on young animals, and 40 pounds on older animals. Those difference have to be taken into consideration.

(Some other speakers at different forums have suggested using height indicators for heifers to determine when the size of the heifer is appropriate for first breeding.)

Heinrichs showed a diagram relating feed costs to average daily gain to calving age and also the simple relationship between those factors and calving weight and ultimately milk production.

According to the diagram feed costs are directly related to average daily gain, which is related to calving age, calving weight and milk production.

In fact, all are interconnected. Heinrichs also said that for those serious about developing the best heifers and the best milking string,

should not be as indifferent to heifer forages as has been fairly widely practiced.

He said he knows that most people feed "heifer hay," which is usually the poorest quality protein forage. He said that is a fine practice, but it isn't fine to feed without knowing what is in the hay.

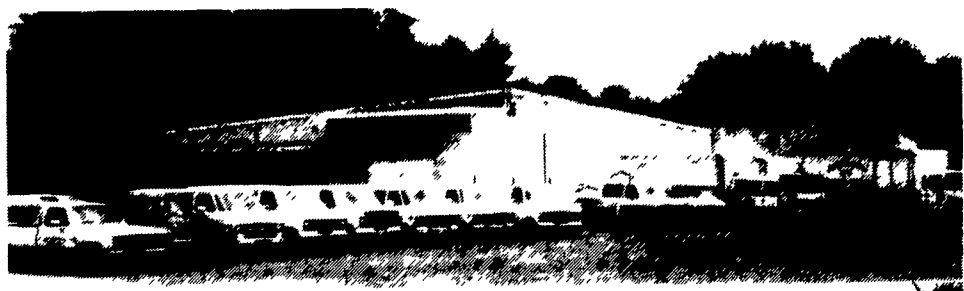
According to Heinrichs, 80 percent to 90 percent of the dry matter a heifer takes in is from forages, so it is imperative that a producer know how much protein is in that forage, so that additional dietary needs can be met. "Almost all rations are going to need some grain," he said.

As a recommendation, Heinrichs said that producers should consider formulating three different heifer rations: one for those from weaning age to 6-months; another for those 7- to 12-months;

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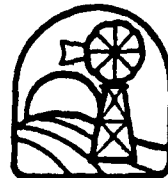
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