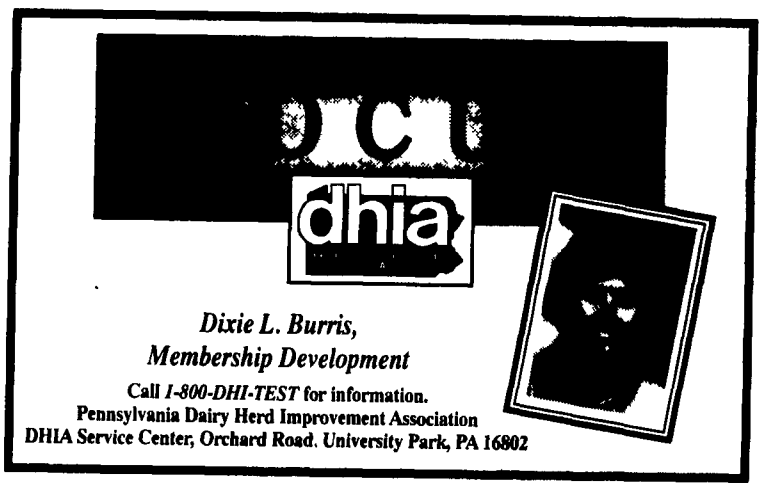
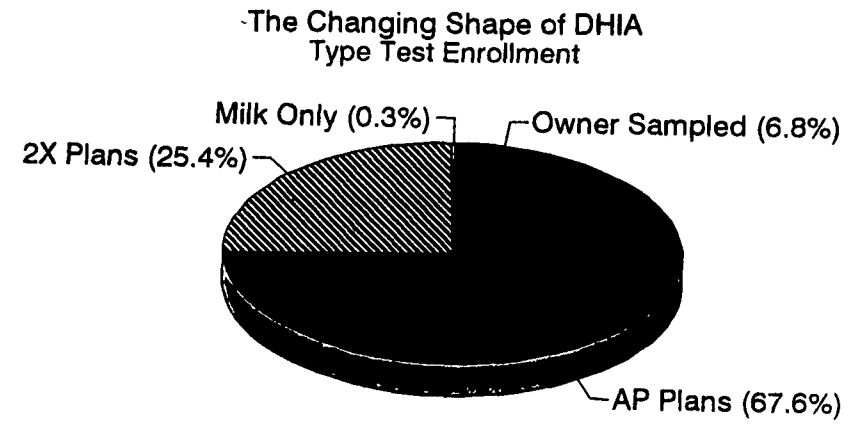
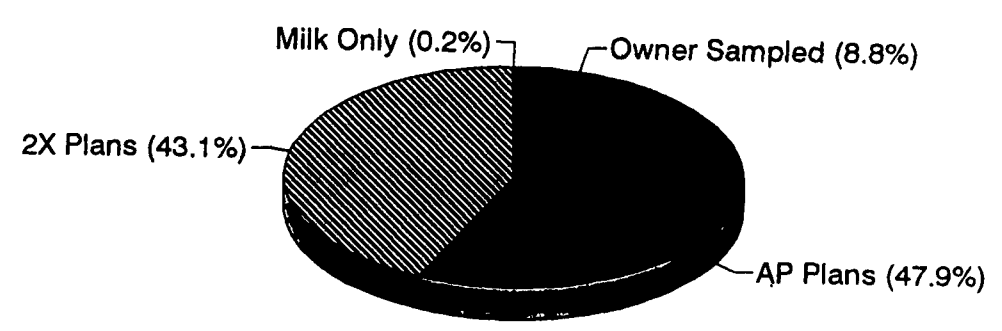


DHIA Changes For Next Century



Enrollment during 1994



Enrollment during 1993

(Continued from Page A1)

ber is more like 3/4 of herds by spring."

The charts of enrollment in various types of test in 1993 and 1994 tell the story. While official records continued to provide the bread and butter of DHIA's business at around 90 percent — a number that has remained stable over the years — the shift in official plans to AM/PM is clear. (see charts)

"I think two things really account for the push," Amick said, "the Holstein Association's acceptance of AP tests was one factor, and of course our own pricing changes were the other."

Are members happy about the change?

"For the most part, yes," Amick said, "although some folks are still skeptical about AP. No matter how long the program's been around, or how good the research is, there will always be some skeptics. But we really don't have any choice. By far and away the biggest cost we have is putting a technician on the farm on test day, and AM/PM reduces that cost to the farmer, and to us, by one test per day. It's as simple as that."

But is there any reason to be suspicious of AP testing?

Not according to Jim Boyer, Pennsylvania DHIA's Processing Center manager.

"If you look at the comparison between milk shipped and milk weighed on test day, that's what counts. And we see virtually no difference between AP and 2X plans. In fact the overage between 2X milk weighed and shipped, and the same numbers for AP is slightly smaller, showing that, if anything, AP testing may be just slightly more accurate. Statistically speaking we see virtually the same average, and the same overall distribution." (see chart)

"If you don't think the numbers will apply in your herd, there's a good test available," he said. "The DHIA technician's laptop program allows him to calculate total milk weights. If you're currently testing 2X, have the technician run the AP total calculation the next time he's in your barn. Right after the first milking print off a list of total milk weights and compare the results with what you actually see after the cows are milked the second time. Maybe you'll still find that AP isn't for you, but you may be surprised.

On the leading edge of DHIA testing plans are the LER, or Labor Efficient Records programs, now in their seventh year.

Under LER testing, a farmer with electronic metering equipment takes milk weights on a monthly or semi-monthly basis and forwards those results to the DHIA processing center, either electronically or on diskette. Milk is only actually weighed and sampled by the DHIA technician on a quarterly basis.

"Pennsylvania DHIA was one of the first in the country to be involved in this program, and we've seen slow but steady growth," Boyer said.

"As on-farm computing becomes more and more common, I expect the LER type programs to really take off. At this point, I'm not sure how many of our dairymen really even know about them. We have about two dozen herds on the option. Mostly, but not exclusively, the larger herds have signed up so far."

Beyond LER there are a number of innovative or experimental programs. Some of the options available include: alternate DHI supervised and owner supervised tests on test day, alternate DHI supervised and owner supervised tests on a monthly basis, APCS quarterly sampling, and a number of variations on the 2X LER program for those herds with electronic meters.

Amick said that right now Pennsylvania has about 75 herds enrolled in various innovative options, and points out that not all of them are restricted to herds with electronic equipment.

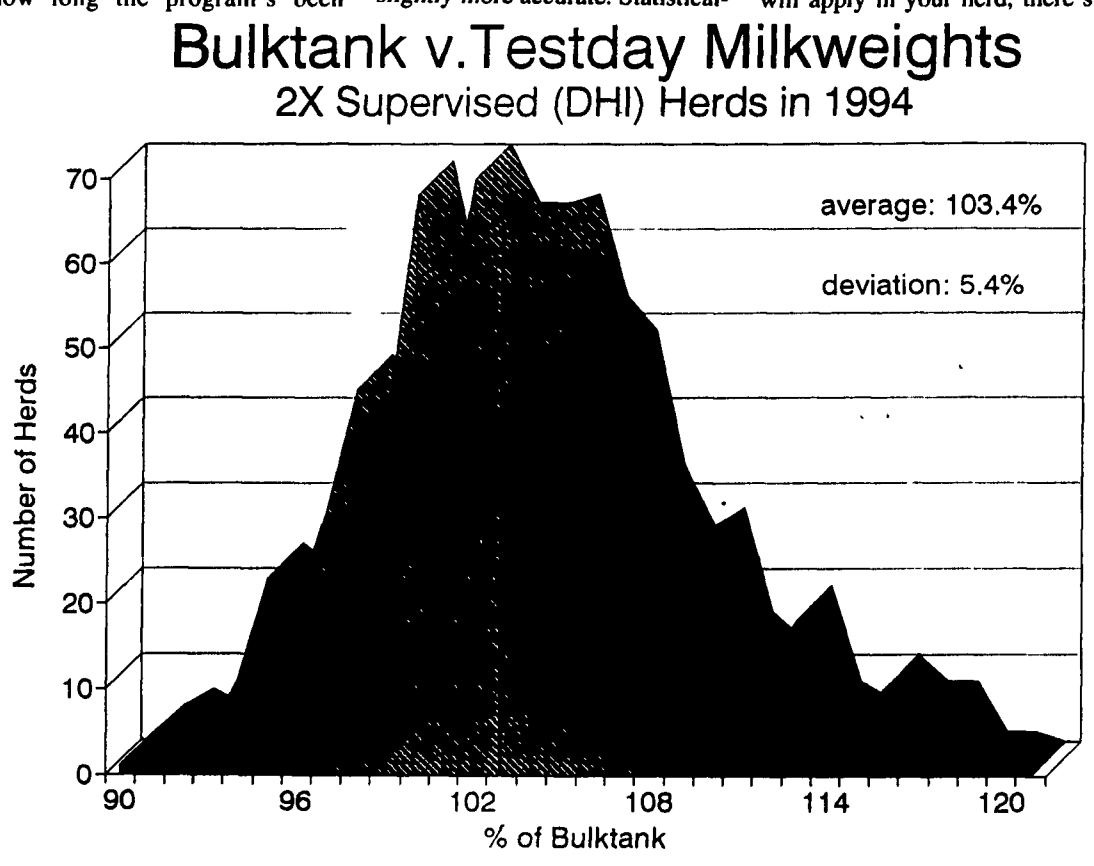
"Some of the best innovative plans are designed around letting the member take some of the milk weights and have the technician take the others when he comes to sample," he said.

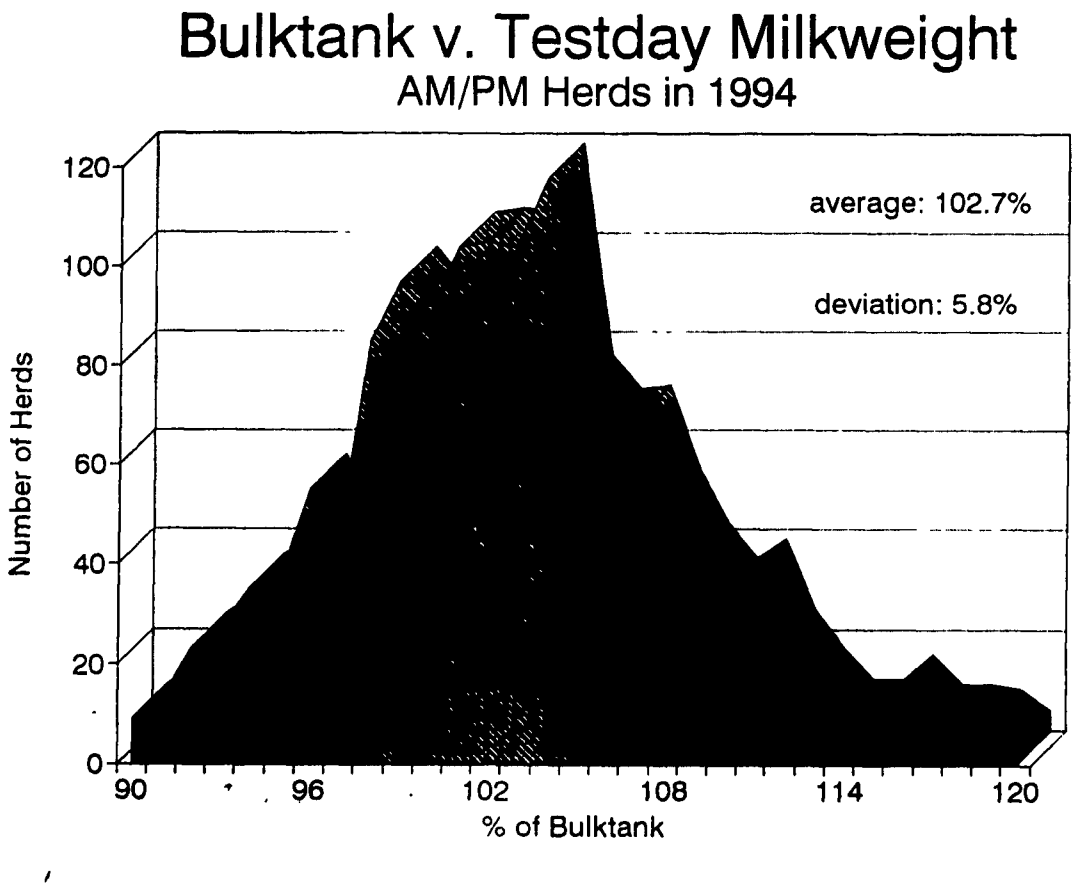
"There are a lot of alternatives, both for cost-savings, and in order to minimize the amount of inconvenience a DHIA technician might cause on test day. I really say that no technician should have anybody quit DHIA anymore. We just have so mush flexibility in what we can allow in official programs that we never had in the past."

But Amick cautioned that the innovative plans, while official, are regarded as "provisional" by National DHIA.

"I don't doubt in the ling run most of these are going to be made regular DHIA tests," Amick said. "That's what happened with LER, which was once an innovative plan. In the meantime, I have dairymen check with their AI units, or with their breed associations to see how they feel about a particular innovative program. While we might allow it, somebody at a bull stud might have questions if the herd is on a young sire program, for example. When in doubt, call the people who are using your records outside of DHIA to be sure."

Call DHIA if you're interested in LER or innovative plans for your own herd, and ask for Dean Amick at 1-800-DHI-TEST.





Average Farm Feed Costs For Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's last week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania. Remember these are averages so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

Corn, No. 2y - 2.29 bu. 4.09 cwt.

Wheat, No. 2 - 3.62 bu. 6.04 cwt.

Barley, No. 3 - 1.80 bu. 3.85 cwt.

Oats, No. 2 - 1.52 bu. 4.74 cwt.

Soybeans, No. 1 - 5.16 bu. 8.61 cwt.

Ear Corn 57.98 ton 2.90 cwt.