

Westfalia Certifies Pa.DHIA Personnel

DAVID BIGELOW
Training Coordinator
UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.)—Westfalia Systemat recently held a certification seminar for 20 Pa. DHIA personnel.

The list of personnel who received the Westfalia certification included 10 technicians, region managers, training coordinator, director of field operations, and members of the processing staff, as well as the help desk.

Receiving the Westfalia training certification gives the participants of the seminar the education needed to provide advanced training to the technicians and members of Pa. DHIA.

The seminar involved three days of education on all aspects of the Westfalia Dairy Plan. The Westfalia Dairy Plan takes the input from the Quick Barnsheet program and creates a data base, which allows the technician to create basically any report the dairymen may request.

Representing Westfalia Systemat and teaching the seminar were Paul Bergstrom, programmer, and Bob Turner and Rob Kolb, sales representatives. This was a great opportunity, to be taught from a programmer's point-of-view as

well as being taught from the sales representative's.

Basic data, such as adding a cow to the system, entering feed amounts and entering monthly milk data was covered in the beginning of the seminar.

The proper way to enter Vet Action Entries was covered next on the seminar agenda. Vet Action Entries include Cow Calving, Heat Observation, Insemination, Pregnancy check entries and a Vet Checklist.

The highlight of the seminar was the participants being taught how to design a quick report, as well as create graphs. In this process, it was made clear how to change report limits, sorting, columns and headings.

At Pa. DHIA, we feel that these reports can give our members another tool in the management of dairy records, in today's fast paced dairy industry.

Westfalia Dairy Plan reports are available on test day from your Pa. DHIA technician.

Ask your technician or region manager about Westfalia Dairy Plan Reports. Also, feel free to contact Dean Amick at 1-800-344-8378, if you have any questions.

National DHIA Considers Rules Change

DAVID SLUSSER
General Manager

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The National DHIA Convention recently held in Burlington, Vermont was very informative and well organized.

The highlight of the convention was the passing of a resolution supporting the development of the Herd and Cow Profiles Program to replace the Official Rules System. Most of what used to be called rules were standard operating procedures effecting on-farm date collecting procedures.

These standard procedures are essential and will be continued to ensure the integrity of the national dairy database, which includes technician training, sample and data collection and milk meter calibration and operations.

Once development is finished, the Herd and Cow Profiles will replace the official rules.

This concept is a snapshot of information pertaining to how records are collected and developed.

The basic herd profile could be a minimum for participation in young sire sampling programs and breed association programs. In order for a herd to participate in these programs, they would have to agree to "open disclosure" of the information in the Herd and/or Cow Profile. The only exception would be "farm only" records.

The Herd Profile is designed to present herd performance and descriptive information. The profile would be uniform throughout the DHIA system.

The Herd Profile may contain information on rolling herd average, average lactation curve, bulk tank comparisons, number of supervised and unsupervised tests, number of component samplings, PTA distribution, M.E. distributions, number of cows, ID changes in last year, percent usable records, percent cows completing lactation, and percent average USDA weighting.

Possible and probable outlier cows will be identified on the PTA and M.E. distribution graphs.

These cows' exceptional production may be due to 1) high genetic merit, 2) unintended environmental bias, 3) errors in data collection, or 4) intentional bias. The method of resolving the reasons for the outlier cows will depend on the users of this information.

The following are several identified users of DHIA information and how they might use the program.

1) Members not interested in marketing cattle or participating in industry programs. They could use the Herd Profile information just for management purposes and not want verifications of outlier information.

2) Non-marketing herds that would like to see their herd averages or cow information listed. Other producers could rely on the reputation of members, or could request additional verification for a fee.

3) Local committees or local DHIA may choose to publish verified records only, underwriting the cost of verification.

4) Herds actively marketing cattle may receive extra value from verified outlier cattle. They would pay for the cost of verification test and benefit from the market place.

5) AI and breed organizations may choose to verify specific animals, and develop guidelines covering the ordering and payment of verification test.

Research is still in progress on this new system.

The resolution passed at the convention indicated support for continued development of the Herd and Cow Profile Program. Implementation of the program will occur after research and development results are finished, and the results indicate intended purposes are met.

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choose. One was in Dauphin County, the other in Chester. He has lived in Chester County ever since.

"I like it here," he said of the area he works in Chester County, much changed from when he started. "I always felt I was doing something worthwhile," he said.

He said that for 45 years, he worked seven days per week, excepting vacations.

In the early years, especially, he

would stay overnight on a lot of farms, not only since everybody on test needed the tester to perform at two milkings per day, but because fuel prices were too high, and gas not as available.

He said there were times when he would do testing at 11 a.m. and again at 11 p.m., finish at 4 a.m., and drive to the next farm to wait until that farm was ready to go.

"At that time, I always carried a suitcase," he said.

The biggest herd he's ever tested numbered 600 head. He

Quality Assured

DIXIE BURRIS
Director Lab. Services

Quality is one of the most important aspects of your Pa. DHIA monthly report.

You'll never see a quality score anywhere on your report, or a little sticker saying, "These samples inspected by No. 4," but sample testing quality affects every aspect of the information you pay for.

Think about it. How do you know that the fat, protein, and somatic cell count results on your monthly report are accurate?

You base feeding, breeding, and even culling decisions on these results. To use this information effectively, you must have confidence in the test results.

As Laboratory Quality Control Specialist for Pa. DHIA I'd like to share with you some of the steps we take, every day, to assure that the results you receive are of the highest possible quality.

First, let me describe several aspects of sample testing that influence the "correctness" of test results.

An instrument must be specific for the component in question. There should not be background noise that causes elevated or depressed readings.

An instrument must produce repeatable results. A given sample should have the same result each time it is tested by the machine.

Of course, each instrument must be accurate, giving the right answer each time a sample is tested.

Every week, I run a battery of quality checks on each machine in the lab to make sure that it reads samples specifically, repeatably and accurately. Each machine is calibrated to standards produced by a nationally distributed company.

The standards cover a wide range of values for fat, protein, lactose and somatic cell count,

thus ensuring that the machines are reading all samples correctly whether, for instance, the somatic cell count is 150,000 or 1,000,000.

Each morning, before any producer samples are tested, the machine operators go through a series of start-up tests to verify machine performance: Is there any background noise? Does the machine produce the correct value on a known sample? Is it giving the same value each time the sample is tested?

Any machine which does not pass all of the performance checks is not used until we can rectify the problem, then verify machine performance.

Every hour during the day, "check test" samples of known value are tested to verify that the machines are reading accurately and consistently. Again, any machine not passing all quality checks at any time is taken off line until we feel confident that it is functioning properly.

Throughout the course of a normal working day, each work station is subjected to a minimum of 73 quality checks!

Of course, these sophisticated machines don't run by themselves. A critical part of the machine operator's job is monitoring the parts of quality that any number of machine tests can't control.

Things like identification, temperature at testing, and condition of samples are monitored by the machine operator as each herd is tested. Quality is the most important aspect of the job for our machine operators.

Although we strive for quick turnaround time, getting the right answer is always more important than getting a fast answer.

Did you know that Pa. DHIA's laboratory scored 99 out of a possible 100 on our last annual certification for National DHIA?



Gerald Miller is the most senior technician on the staff of the Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

would test between 5,400 to 6,000 cows per month on his circuit.

Up until eight years ago, he served 72 herds on his circuit, most of them on DHIA.

He said that part of the reason he was attracted to the job in the first place was because of the benefits package that came along with the job. "We had a good retirement," he said.

But there's more to it, he said. There's the atmosphere, the outside work, the being able to be home almost everyday to see and help his children growing up.

"I like my work," Miller said. "I like working with people and working with cows. And I like things that are farm oriented. I like that kind of work. I can't tolerate a lazy person."

He played softball regularly up until he was 60, but now spends a lot of his free time traveling and camping.

He and his wife and now, sometimes their eight grandchildren, go camping and sightseeing to West Virginia's Smokey Mountains, or, more frequently, to the French Creek State Park, or to Muddy Run.

"I guess I'm a bit of a gypsy," he smiled, turning to mark down the number of a cow that just entered the parlor.

Whenever your samples are tested, and whatever type of testing you request, you can be assured that the test results you get from Pa. DHIA are of the highest possible quality.

At Pa. DHIA, we care!



Dixie Burris, director of laboratory services, left, and Cathy Houghwout, laboratory control specialist, are in the Pa. DHIA laboratory where many quality control operations take place daily to ensure accuracy in reports.