

Pa. DHIA Heifer Net Sets Stage

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Senior Project Leader

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Pa. DHIA is designing a new cutting edge program that will take a dairyman's herd into cyberspace and the information super highway.

This new program will be called Heifer Net and it will electronically match the requirements of dairy animal buyers and suppliers.

The dairyman will set the asking price and the buyer will set the minimum standards.

The Heifer Net will search the Heifer Net data base and prepare a list of qualifying animals for the buyer.

The Heifer Net program will actually be made up of five different Pa. DHIA Nets: Heifer Net will contain heifers for sale; Cow Net will contain cows for sale; Bull Net will contain bulls for sale; Unborn Net will contain calves that are yet to be born that will be for sale; and Embryo Net will contain embryos for sale.

Each new animal enrolled in one of the Heifer Net programs will be electronically added to the Heifer Net data base. This process will be automatic and will require little or no input from the dairyman or Pa. DHIA technician.

Each Heifer Net data base record will contain the animal's identification and genetic merit, identification and genetic merit of the animal's sire, dam, maternal grand dam, maternal grand sire, reproductive data (if bred), production data (if milking), body weight and condition, and minimum asking price of the animal.

Individuals wishing to purchase animals through the Heifer Net will complete a "Search Option Request Form." This form will allow the Heifer Net programs to determine the breed, sex, age, and weight of animals being requested.

Minimum genetic merit standards for animals and their ancestors may also be set by the buyer. Minimum production levels may be set for the animal (if milking), dam, and maternal grand dam.

If bred animals are being requested, requirements may be placed on due dates and genetic merit of service sires.

An individual using this service will also report the number of animals required, number of heifers per herd, and offering price for qualifying heifers.

Using the Heifer Net data base, Pa. DHIA will be able to produce pedigrees for any animal in the system. These pedigrees will be available on paper or via the Internet.

The Heifer Net and all these additional features will be available through our Web Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dhia.psu.edu>.

Now with the use of Heifer Net and the Internet, buyers and suppliers of dairy animals can be electronically matched with the stroke of a few computer keys.

Keep your eyes on the printed news, talk to your Pa. DHIA technician, and sign on to Pa. DHIA's Web Page to keep posted on the progress of the Heifer Net.

Forward On All Fronts

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cows, groups and the whole herd. It also includes cost analysis and projected cost for your heifer program.

Pa. DHIA is the first and only DHIA to offer this service and has been doing it since Nov. 1, 1995.

Long Range Strategic Planning

Over the last year and a half, the board of directors has been involved in strategic, long-range planning.

They have studied the needs of our members that will enhance their competitiveness into the 21st century, and set the course for Pa. DHIA to meet those needs. The plan has four major areas of concern: new products and services; market development and governing efficiencies; internal management strategies; and strategic alliances.

New products and services have already spun off from Long Range Planning Committee ideas.

Pennsylvania includes a broad array of dairy farms from small to large. To improve their bottom line and profit, our services must enable our members to improve production cost through more research on MUN and performance economics.

Also, because our members have the highest percentage of identified animals and useable



Dave Slusser

records for genetic evaluations, the long-range plan includes using this advantage to bring more dollars into our family farm operations.

The result is the development of "Heifer Net."

On our farmer-owned and controlled DRPC data base, we have around 500,000 dairy animals of all breeds, registered and grade, and all forms of testing programs. This includes heifers, cows, bulls, and even unborn calves.

"Heifer Net" includes an efficient network in which we can find cattle in our members' herds that are sought by buyers throughout the world. It will also include heifer raising costs and pedigrees and certificates of identification.

The program is presently under development and will be introduced in stages over the next two years.

Governance changes under the long range plan include board downsizing. As a result, the board restructuring includes going from 18 directors to 11 and is being introduced to the delegates at the district and annual meetings of the association this winter.

The internal management phases of the plan include good management principles needed to operate the cooperative in an efficient manner and employee tracking to improve the opportunity for good people to advance within the system.

Pa. DHIA's board is exploring opportunities to more efficiently serve the members in a mature market through strategic alliances, joint ventures or possible mergers. In the highly competitive marketplace that our members now find themselves, their institutions that serve them must look for better, more efficient ways to serve them and enhance their farm's profits.

The last year has been very busy for the board and employees of Pa. DHIA. Our board is determined to move DHIA from a reactive to a proactive force for dairy farmers. The mission of Pa. DHIA and its long range plan is proactive, and next year will be more action packed. Stay tuned!

Pa. DHIA On The World Wide Web

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features to bring it up to date. The Internet is hot, and we are there."

Exactly how "hot" is reflected in the exploding growth of the Internet in general and the World Wide Web in particular.

Information available from Nielsen Media Research indicates that as much as 17 percent of the total population of the United States and Canada has access to the Internet, and of those, nearly 20 million people are currently using the World Wide Web.

Commerce on the Web — still in its infancy — is mushrooming as quickly as the proliferation of new sites. To date, more than 2.5 million people have made purchases online. Forty-three percent of all North American businesses now have some form of advertising on the World Wide Web.

Pa. DHIA's foray into cyberspace has been nearly as aggressive, but Boyer said that services currently offered represent just the tip of the iceberg.

"We want to make more resource material available to people who support the dairy industry," he said.

"One of our best kept secrets is the so-called 'Gray Manual' that explains all our reports. But it's difficult and expensive to get updates out.

"By putting this kind of information on the Web page as a series of articles, people interested in DHIA support will be able to select and print only the information that interests them. And we'll be able to maintain the documentation more easily, and more importantly, we'll be able to do it in real time.

"Just recently, we made available online many of the most commonly requested formats of our

DHIA year-end Almanac," Boyer said.

"Interested in the high herd for protein for 1996? See us on the web. How about the top producers in breed for our annual management awards? That's there too."

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"To most effectively make use of new programs, we really have to move our technicians and end-users to a graphical environment such as Microsoft Windows," he said.

"DOS is dead, dead, dead. We don't recommend that people doing new setups even buy DOS-based programs anymore. It's completely yesterday," Boyer said.

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of legacy applications in the countryside, including programs we've written for our own technicians. But we'll change that, and as people see the new applications available on the Web and in Windows programs, they aren't going to want to use their old DOS stuff anymore anyway."

The new World Wide Web page contains links to supporting industries like breed associations, AI studs, farm publications, even dairy humor, and offers new, electronic mail, advertising and other services to industry cooperators, and of course, DHIA members.

"The real power of the Internet is in commerce," Boyer said, "and a great deal of that capability remains untapped.

"But the World Wide Web is now coming into its own. It is very much a gold-rush mentality. By some estimates almost 60 percent of new Web sites on earth were added in the first few months of 1996. In order to capitalize on that kind of environment you've got to get there firstest with the mostest," Boyer said.

"We intend to make this kind of marketing power available to DHIA members for selling heifers, cows, embryos, maybe even equipment. We'll provide the latest in new analytical tools like MUN and true protein. And we'll offer access to resources like vets, nutritionists and other agribusiness consultants who support DHIA."

Dave Slusser, Pa. DHIA's general manager, elaborated.

"We see nothing but possibilities. At a time when people — especially those with their own personal computers — are questioning the value of DHIA, the new services we're implementing showcase the great benefit of belonging to a cooperative association," Slusser said.

"For example, one service we envision would allow people to offer advertising to purchasers who want heifers. A dairyman on our heifer program will be able to hook up with buyers literally anywhere in the world. And by providing a one-stop shopping center with database capability, those buyers will be able to fill orders for the exact kinds and numbers of calves they want, easily and quickly.

"That gives real value to both the purchaser and the seller, and that's something you can't do with a computer all by yourself," Slusser said.

"I see us being able to connect dairymen to the right vets, feed mills, equipment dealers, and financial consultants to solve the problems of their individual farms. That kind of networking operation just won't be available to people who're isolated from DHIA."

"We also see the so-called 'intranet applications' of this technology as being vital to the continued efficiency of our operation," Boyer added.

"In intranet applications you apply the power of the Web to more effectively reach people within your own organization. We will make these and other products available to our field staff, espe-

cially DHIA technicians.

"We want them to be able to dial in 24 hours per day to get the most up-to-the-minute information on herd status, lab components, news, e-mail, employee bulletins, even weather," Boyer said.

"Now, while all of these were possible to some extent through our lab BBS and the ARIS system, we really are talking about taking a quantum leap in the availability and ease of accessing information. Anybody who's ever used a typical BBS system and then hooked into the Web will tell you, it's like the difference between rehydrogenated palm fat and real butter."

Sensenig

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The couple first farmed for three years at Philhaven Farms in Lebanon County, where Nelson has credited Aaron Shirk, the farm manager, with teaching him about milking cows.

One of the first things they did at their own 177-acre farm was to expand stalls and construct silos for silage and haylage. Since then, they opened up the barn and installed tunnel ventilation with six, 48-inch fans.

In mid-1994, the end of the barn opposite the fans was opened and an air-cooling system installed that works on drawing air into the barn through water to achieve evaporative cooling.

Sensenig said the system lowers the air temperature inside the barn from 7 to 20 degrees below the ambient temperature, depending on humidity.

He's been using the cooler for the past two years.

A team approach — with veterinarian, nutritionist and Nelson working together — was incorporated early on and continues.

In early 1994, just after Monsanto Corp. received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to sell its form of recombinant bovine somatotropin, the Sensenig herd was on it.

The cows still receive BST, are milked three times per day and are fed TMR at least five times per day.

Cow comfort is emphasized.

Nelson said he feeds four pounds of cotton seed, corn silage rolled when bagged, haylage, and a custom supplement consisting of soymeal, steamed soybeans, corn, distiller's grain, and some fortification. That has been consistent for some time.

For the past year he said he has top dressed a complete feed top dress of 17-percent protein. He dropped that back for the past two months and said it has been working.