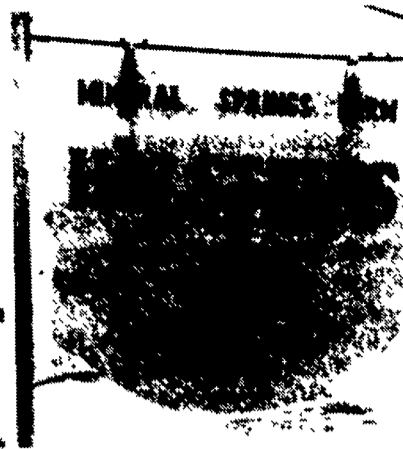


Maryland Young Couple Proving You Can Make It Farming



George Donnon has developed a nice Holstein herd from scratch. Hard work and patience are the keys to success.



(Continued from Page A1)

going to make it. And they love their cows and calves. They know each animal's personality and take great pleasure when one of their calves grows up to be a milk cow in their herd.

They believe tame animals respond in greater milk production, and in better herd health too. Cows are not overly pushed for high production. An old cow that is still in good shape is cherished more than a burned out two-year-old with a championship record.

Calving intervals average 12.9 months, and some cows often calve on the same day each year. They believe you need this kind of good herd management to survive.

What would they tell other young people who want to go into farming?

"Follow your dreams," they say. "Don't let anyone tell you you can't make it. If it's in your head, you are going to do it."

"Yes, it takes a lot of patience, and it is a long term thing. You will not see a turn-over for five or six years, and you will be cash poor and equity rich."

"No money, honey," will be said a lot. And you can't expect to start at the top. But if you watch your debt load, you can make it."

For winning the prestigious young farmer award, the Donnons won some cash awards from Dodge and Safemark. And they get to go to Nashville and Denver for national conventions. But when all the hoopla is over, this farm couple will return to their Cecil County farm with just one thing in mind.

"I knew I wanted to farm for a long time, but people said we couldn't make it," George said. "On the other hand a lot of people have helped us along the way. I just want to prove a young farm family really can make it farming with patience and working together as a team."

Hormones Can Improve Reproduction Efficiency

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NEWARK, Del. — In looking over the University of Delaware's dairy herd records or those of Delaware dairy farmers, I note that the statistics on dairy cows leave much to be desired.

While there are several parameters for diagnosing this situation quickly and precisely for each cow, the causes for reproductive efficiency are many and not always obvious or easily corrected.

Production levels, feeding and management skills also are involved.

Age at first calving should be no more than 24 months or something is wrong with the way the heifers are raised and when and how they are bred.

The interval between calvings should be no more than 12. months or something is wrong with the after-calving cleaning of the cows, heat detection and breeding. The exception may be that milk production levels are so high, even after 10 months of milking, that an extended lactation and no drying-up at 60 or 70 pounds milk is preferred.

State DHIA data reveal that some Delaware cows have a calving interval of much more than 12.5 months, and herd averages show several herds above the 12.5-month calving interval. The average calving interval nationally is 14 months (138 days).

Studies have identified the cost of greater calving interval beyond 100 days (12.5 months) to be about \$3 per day. This means that dairy farmers with a calving interval of 138 days are losing \$3x38=\$114 per

cow per year.

Other studies have shown that one-third of the average dairy herd has had no estrus or heat detected within 30 days after calving. Normally a cow should have the first heat at 15 to 20 days after calving and the second heat at 30 to 35 days after calving.

If a cow has calving difficulty — including twins, retained after-birth, metritis, milk fever, ketosis and cystic ovaries — she will likely be delayed with her first heat after calving and is a good bet for increased calving interval.

If you hope to succeed with breeding either heifers or cows, you must rely on successful heat detection. There are means to orchestrate heat occurrence rather

than wait forever for it and possibly miss it.

Understanding endocrinology has given us powerful means within the veterinary "tool chest," specifically hormone therapy. Hormone therapy also would be the prime treatment for those difficult cows that you want to bring back in line to normal reproductive efficiency.

Hormone treatments are not that costly compared to the loss of possibly \$114 per cow per year as shown in the formula above. Two major products now on the market are gonadotropin releasing hormone (Gn-RH) and prostaglandin (PGF2alpha), which cost \$6 or \$3 per dose, respectively.

These hormones can be administered successfully in several ways,

but which is the more profitable? Studies at Kansas and Wisconsin have identified five regimens.

The first treatment regimen is 100 microgram Gn-RH one time at 10 to 14 days after calving, which brings cows earlier into heat and reduces cystic ovaries, but cows with metritis are not good candidates. Reduction in

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