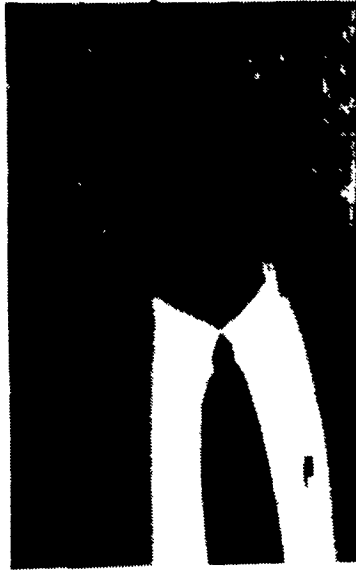


Dairy Management Seminars Held

RONKS (Lancaster Co.) — Hooper Feeds conducted their 5th annual Dairy Management Seminars last month. Over 100 Lancaster County dairymen attended the all-day seminars designed to highlight some areas where profits are typically lost without writing a check directly for the expense. The areas presented were dry cow and close-up dry cow management, viewing the farm as a business, management of fresh cows and heifer growing management.

Dr. Jim Nocek of Spruce Haven Research Farm, in New York State spoke first about dry cow management. He pointed out that proper care of the dry cow meant looking at her dry period as two distinct periods, the "early" dry period and the "late" or "close-up" dry period. Nutrition and management

need to be different for these two periods of time. Dr. Nocek explained that the early dry period is a time to maintain or improve body condition. It is also a time to give the rumen a chance for rebuilding of the rumen papillae through feeding high forage diets, although he related that diets for these dry cows can be highly variable in the amounts of hay, haylage, corn silage and grains just so long as they are properly balanced. The farmers listened intently as Dr. Nocek discussed the close-up dry period and showed information on the detrimental effects of allowing these cows to drop too much in feed intake during these 2-3 weeks before freshening. "These cows experience a natural drop in intake during this time period. If intake



Thomas Nauman

drops 25% below normal, these cows have a very high probability of developing some kind of metabolic disease within the first 30 days postpartum," said Dr. Nocek. He highlighted ways to keep these cows on feed and emphasized having a properly balanced ration to compensate for the increased nutrient demands and decreased intakes during the close-up dry period.

Glenn Shirk, Lancaster County Extension Dairy Agent, spoke next, with an emphasis on the need for farmers to look at their farm as a business. "We often hear that a farm is a good place to raise a family; but in order for it to be a good place for a family it must first be a good business," explained Glenn. In keeping with the theme of finding those areas where profits are lost, he challenged the dairymen to examine their farms as a business. He

pointed out that buildings and machinery do not make good investments compared to cows. Cows provide a quick return on investment, a high return on investment and they reproduce. Machinery and buildings do none of these things. Glenn also highlighted some areas to boost profits such as selling more cows for dairy purposes, reducing feed costs, reducing calving intervals and reducing cull rates. He pointed out that many farmers can do these things simply by changing some management practices. Glenn also reminded them that a \$1.25 reduction in milk price for cows averaging 19,000 lbs of milk meant that on an 8% loan you've lost the ability to service \$1000 of debt per cow. He cautioned the audience to use lending agencies wisely and invest in the things that provide the best return on the dollar. He concluded that we need to be looking at profit per cow and not only milk per cow.

addition to providing an update on rumen protected amino acids, Dr. Nocek talked about effective strategies for feeding fats. As with dry cows, Dr. Nocek strongly emphasized that dairymen need to feed these fresh cows palatable feeds that keep them eating and that keep the rumen functioning properly.

The meeting concluded with Tom Nauman, Nutritionist with Hooper Feeds, talking about improving profits by getting heifers into the herd at a younger age and at a larger size. He pointed out that heifers entering the herd at a larger size produce more milk on the average than smaller ones and he showed data to suggest that heifers entering the herd earlier end up having more lifetime milk than heifers entering the herd later. A third area he looked at was the economics of getting heifers into the milking string sooner. "It actually costs less to calve heifers out at an earlier age. By reducing the days from birth to first calving, we reduce the days she is consuming forages. Even when hay prices are reasonable, we can get her milking for less money if we feed her the proper amounts of protein and energy for fast growth," Tom explained. He emphasized the need to monitor intakes, especially when the heifers are out on pasture during the summer months when grass growth slows. He also emphasized the need to test forages for heifers and to keep them on a balanced diet.

Other highlights of the day were door prizes and lots of good food. The dairymen left feeling that their hearts, bodies and minds were nourished.

Dairy Day Message:

(Continued from Page A22)

East Smithfield Dairy Farmer Glenn Gorrell has taken advantage of the program offered through DairyLea for about one year.

"In my opinion, for everybody who sells milk the most important thing should be how much money you get for your product and to know what the market is doing and where the market is going," Gorrell stated.

Before Gorrell began putting his money on the line, he watched the market and the weather very closely. Even so, in his first attempt at locking in his price, Gorrell lost some money. The milk price actually went higher in August and September than he had contracted for. However, he has since made back that money and bolstered additional milk checks with the contracts that were taken out for November, December and January.

Even so, Gorrell admits that he's learning more and more about the market all the time. His biggest piece of advice to farmers who want to try their hand at forward contraction is that the purpose is not to get the most money, but to have an insurance policy of sorts when the bottom falls out.

"Futures are not so much to

pick the high prices, but to protect yourself from the low," he said. He also adds that it's important to know your individual cost of production and to let everyone who has an interest in the milk check know exactly what is going on.

"If a partner doesn't know what you're doing, it may be a problem," Gorrell notes. "Your banker might be interested too, especially if you're hedging on your own."

After the discussion on milk prices, the focus of Dairy Day shifted to sessions on pesticide usage, where farmers could get needed pesticide credits and a program on dry cow management where farmers heard how to fine-tune dry cow rations.

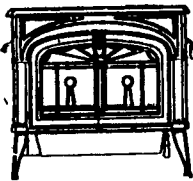
Other Dairy Day opportunities included a chance to meet with the 41 exhibitors and take advantage of free blood pressure screening, lung function analysis and blood sugar screening. Visitors also had the chance to have their cholesterol levels checked and hear suggestions for treating various foot ailments from a visiting podiatrist.

"It's a good thing for us to be here," said podiatrist Kathleen Panepinto as she examined a farmer's foot. Sometimes people won't make a specific point to come out to treat minor problems.

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