

Berks DHIA Reviews Heifer 98 Program, Awards Members

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff
LEESPORT (Berks Co.)

— Even more than dry cows, heifers can be the most "neglected and forgotten animals on the farm," said George Cudoc, a consulting dairyman for the Pa.DHIA.

Cudoc spoke about the new state DHIA Heifer 98 computer program, which he introduced as one more tool to manage, evaluate, breed, and market dairy heifers.

Cudoc addressed 100 Berks County DHIA members, family, and friends Tuesday afternoon at the Berks County Ag Center in Leesport at the group's annual awards presentation banquet.

The Heifer 98 database program can be customized to meet a wide variety of heifer management needs, which can be transferred to spreadsheet. The computer program can enable dairy farmers to get a complete transcript of what heifers there are on the farm, how they are feeding, what health maintenance steps have been taken — in short, a complete nutritional and health history of each animal.

The records on each heifer can be sorted by groups or individually. Cudoc demonstrated the menu-driven program at the DHIA banquet. The software, which operates on personal computers equipped with Windows 95, costs \$29.95.

Cudoc, who was herdsman at Marburger Farm Dairy in Valencia a number of years, said he has been a dairyman and understands what a dairy manager is looking for. The program fits the needs of the dairyman because it can be selective and individually programmed. Heifers can be selected by herd or individually by age, size, body conditioning, or weight.

Breed criteria, such as the registration of dam and sire, can follow right along with other information. Also, an electronic snapshot of the heifer can be scanned in and appear right next to the data in the entry. An entry can be highlighted, and events — including pregnancy checking — can be noted to help the dairy farmer keep track of that essential chore.

In the end, dairy farmers can analyze every heifer to see the "good doers or not good doers," he noted. Information can be sorted by various means to get a complete overview of the farm's heifer program.

All event data entered into the program "follows through" the life of the heifer. The event data that

can be stored is limited not necessarily by today's computer size or storage capacity, but by the imagination of the herd manager.

"It's the best buy on the market," Cudoc noted. "It's a very good educational tool."

For more information about the Heifer 98 program, written by Pa.DHIA, contact Cudoc toll-free at (800) 344-8378.

The consulting dairyman for Pa.DHIA also spoke about the extensive uses and benefits to which users can derive the Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) program at the state DHIA. He told dairy farmers that the number one input cost is feed, and the MUN helps track the protein portion of the feed costs.

The MUN program carefully tracks the protein usage of the dairy animals on the farm. Are the animals using nitrogen efficiently? And what ways can producers utilize protein more efficiently, thereby, in ways, cutting production costs?

In several cases, Cudoc helped identify where herd managers were underfeeding protein. Cudoc noted that people should use MUN "every month on farms." The use of MUN depends on a lot of factors, including age of cows, types of diet, etc. It is one of the services state DHIA membership offers — and if those reports are prepared, it only makes sense for DHIA members to use them.

"We are in the business to help people troubleshoot a situation and make best use of DHIA records," he said. "We can show you how the cows tell you what is going on in dairy farm."

Also at the banquet, Berks County agent Clyde Myers presented a slide show on the 1997 Herd Management Farm Award Winner, Hiddenview Holsteins, operated by Tim and Teresa Kissling, Robesonia.

"This farm has always been noted for its quality animals and high production," said Myers.

Last year, according to the agent, the farm saw their score in the herd management area increase by 143 points and present a rolling herd average of 29,210 pounds milk, 985 pounds fat, and 931 pounds of protein. "This shows their productive management continues," said Myers.

Hiddenview Farm includes 65 head of registered Holsteins plus replacements on the 144-acre farm, with 92 tillable acres.

An additional 120 tillable acres are rented. Crops grown include 60 acres of hay for hay and haylage and 105 acres for corn silage and grain.

When Myers asked the keys to success of their herd, Tim and Teresa replied, "feed management, genetics, and cow care and comfort." Above and beyond these is doing the little things and "paying attention to details," Myers noted. "These are the real differences between success and failure."

Nutrition is a key ingredient in production. The Kisslings feed a two-group TMR of 75 and 95 pounds. Topdressing is done in both groups. Sixty percent of the forage in the ration is alfalfa haylage and 40 percent of the ration's forage is corn silage with the rest, high moisture ear corn. A 21 percent protein complete feed is used as a topdress.

The Kisslings check moisture levels. Haylage is checked twice per week, or everyday if changes are obvious, Myers noted.

Tim believes using a Koster tester is easier and more accurate than using a microwave.

Pieces of plastic are used to show new cuttings. Cows are fed for a 55-pound dry matter intake. For the Kisslings, it is essential to watch consumption and digestive changes, as in fecal consistency. The Kisslings believe that cows always milk best on first-cutting haylage.

"The base of any successful herd is genetics," Myers said.

Because of good breeding, it has not been necessary to beef cows because of low production. Sire selection is based on high component, milk, and type.

Via ET work the last several years, 75 percent of the herd's genetic base is from two cow families. Many bulls have been selected by the commercial studs from these two cow families. But ET work is used to market animals, not improve milk production.

Teresa cautions that farms should not completely rely on ET work to improve genetics. Until sexing is perfected, Myers noted, the costs of ET work "is too expensive."

The top 25 TPI bulls are used. Milk and type are the most important traits. Having excellent type, Myers noted, means cows stay in the herd longer.

Watching the repeatability of bulls is also important. In the type area, udder characteristics are the top priority, followed by feet, legs, and frame. Teresa strongly believes that production follows frame and size. Using bulls from different studs while analyzing cow type helps build a good genetic base.

The last important area, Myers said, is cow comfort and care. In the Kisslings' opinion, stall comfort is the "number one factor in cow care and comfort," said Myers. This includes a stall size of 70 inches by 51 inches, mattress plus bedding, or a bedding saver plus lots of bedding.

Ventilation, comprised of smaller inlets and fans (for winter) and tunnel for summer, has eliminated cow summer slumps.

And herd health, including a vaccination program for each cow, is critical. Vaccinations include a nine-way vaccine with the five-way Lepto, BVD, IBR, PI3, and Hemophilus Somnus. Clostridium is also used.

Mastitis is managed through the somatic cell count program. Moni-



George Cudoc, left, spoke about the new state DHIA Heifer 98 computer program, which he introduced as one more tool to manage, evaluate, breed, and market dairy heifers. Cudoc explains the program to a Berks DHIA member Tuesday afternoon at the Berks County Ag Center in Leesport at the group's annual awards presentation banquet.

toring cows with high counts is essential. If fresh cows are high, Myers noted, they are treated immediately, as well as any cow with clinical mastitis. Oxytocin is used when cows are treated. J5 coliform vaccine has reduced the incidence of coliform mastitis. Cows are vaccinated when they are dried off and a booster is given three weeks later. Heifers are vaccinated when they calve and with a booster three weeks later. Dry treatments are rotated as well as teat dips. Iodine is used in the summer and when cows are on pasture. Chlorixidene is used in the winter.

Changes to help labor efficiency are always taking place, Myers said. A new eight-month manure storage of 96,000 cubic feet is being erected for manure from 65 cows and 80 heifers and milkhouse wastes. A push-off ramp from the heifer area and gravity pipe from the stall barn moves the manure to the storage.

"Cost sharing was received," Myers said. "Other farmers in the Tully should consider taking advantage of these funds to help improve water quality in the watershed."

Herd and cow awards were presented at the banquet by Paul Hartman, Berks County DHIA secret-

ary, and Barry Gauker. For the herds, separate awards for high herd milk, protein, and butterfat were presented to Fantasyland Holsteins, Robesonia. In high herd milk, Fantasyland was 30,468 pounds, protein 979 pounds, and butterfat, 1,074 pounds.

Most improved herd for milk, at +4,328 pounds, went to Dana and Debra Stoudt, Bernville. The Stoudts also won most improved herd for protein, at +151 pounds. Most improved herd for fat went to Ring-Kul Farm, Fleetwood, at +151 pounds. Lowest herd somatic cell count went to Knauer Brothers, Robesonia, at 150,000 SCC.

The herd management award went to Ring-Kul Farm at 144 points.

In the cow awards category, high lifetime milk at 322,039 pounds and high lifetime protein at 10,340 pounds went to Reu-Hel Farms, Mohrsville. High lifetime fat at 12,278 pounds went to Plushanski Farms, Kutztown.

In high individual lactation, all separate awards for milk, protein, and fat went to Plushanski Farms. In the milk category, Plushanski won at 42,606 pounds, protein at 1,465 pounds, and fat at 1,612 pounds.

Lancaster County Eligible for Disaster Relief

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Congressman Joseph R. Pitts' office (PA-16) announced today that Lancaster County has been declared one of several contiguous disaster areas by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a result of losses due to hail, heavy rainfall and tornado winds which occurred in June 2, 1998.

This declaration allows family-sized farm operators who have experienced significant damage to be eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The FSA considers each loan application separately and will

make its decision based on several criteria including the extent of the losses, security available, and repayment ability.

Pitts' spokeswoman Tonya Neff Klause hailed the declaration as important for farms that have sustained heavy storm damage. She said, "We are pleased that the Secretary of Agriculture included Lancaster County in his list of disaster areas that can now recover some of the serious costs that resulted from the storms of the summer of 1998. Now several of our family farms will be able to receive some much needed relief."



In high individual lactation, all separate awards for milk, protein, and fat went to Plushanski Farms, represented by Clyde Plushanski, left. At right is Ken Sanner, chairman of the Berks DHIA.


MILK
Where's your mustache?™