

in the test period.

Milking days, divided by total days, times (multiplied by) 100, gives the "percent cow days in milk."

(Editor's Note: Days In Milk is frequently abbreviated in dairy industry text as DIM.)

Let's look at an example:

GIVEN:

1. 100 cows in a herd.
2. Days from test day to test day is 30.
3. There are 2,562 total Milk Days

TOTAL DAYS = # COWS IN HERD X TEST DAY INTERVAL

% COW DAYS IN MILK = MILK DAYS ÷ TOTAL DAYS X 100.

∴ THEREFORE:

1. $100 \times 30 = 3,000$;
2. $(2,562 \div 3,000) = .854$
- $.854 \times 100 = 85.4\%$ COW DAYS IN MILK

If this same herd is reported to be at "91 % Days In Milk," then:
 $3,000 \times 91\% = 2,730$ days milked.

To know if this can be a management tool, we must look at some factors that contribute to this number. Freshening a large number of cows in the period will cause an increase in percent cows days in milk.

Bringing new heifers into the herd at freshening will also show an increase. Drying cows off early or cows with extended dry periods will cause a decrease in percent cow days in milk.

In theory, a herd that milks all cows for 305 days and then allows them to dry for 60 days would attain a percent cow days in milk of 83.56 % $((305/365) \times 100 = 83.56)$.

This would be a goal for herds if we lived in a perfect world, but we do not.

Currently the state average is 87 percent Days In Milk.

This means that the average PA DHIA cows milks for 317 days and then is put dry.

That is okay if we have the cow bred on time and she stands dry for 60 days. What happens when she is dry longer?

Now we see that the percentage Days In Milk goes down and profits along with it.

How do we use information like % DIM?

I wish I could say that there is a number everyone should work towards, but there is not.

We can use this number to help analyze our herd's milking performance.

When we evaluate management changes that cause production increases for milking cows, we need to keep in mind that the particular change is affected by the makeup of the herd. This is how I use percentage days in milk.

For instance, if a herd has production increase from 67 to 71 pounds and percentage days in milk stays the same then we have a true increase.

On the other hand, if % DIM increases from 78 percent to 84 percent during this same increase, then the real response to our efforts is less than the 4-pound increase that we had.

In this case, a 4-pound increase is 6 percent, and coincides with a 6-percent increase in days in milk, or freshness of the herd.

This is a truer evaluation of management changes, than just looking at milk response.

Another example has a herd producing 80 pounds per cow for three straight months.

On the fourth month, the average drops to 73 pounds. What happened?

By looking at %DIM, we see no change during the first three months. On the fourth month, this drops from 86 percent to 83 percent.

My read here would be that, even though we could predict that production would drop due to changes in freshness of the herd, it is too severe a drop, and something negative has occurred in our management scheme.

The near 9-percent drop in production was partly due to our herd makeup, but probably only a 2- to 3-pound loss should have been expected.

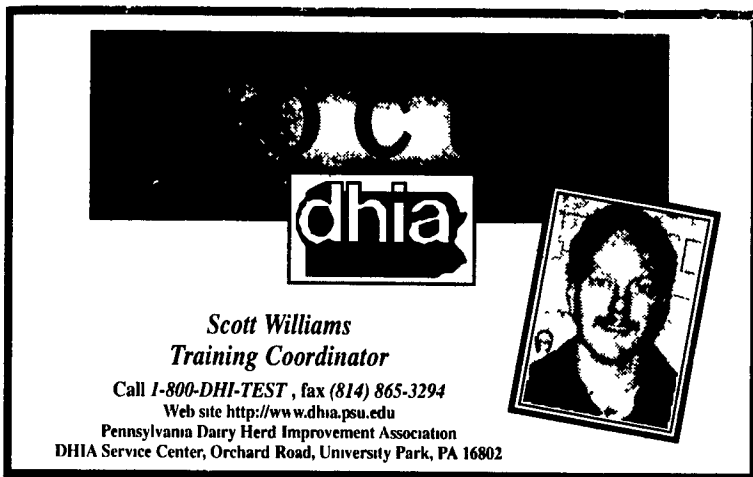
We need to look at the 4- to 5-pound loss not due to herd makeup.

This is my explanation of percent Days In Milk, and how to use it to evaluate true herd performance.

I am sure some of you feed people out there have had the misfortune of trying new products on farms only to fall completely flat.

Use this %DIM information to realistically predict herd production potential before you make unattainable promises.

Again, the value of PA DHIA records shines through.



dhia

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Call 1-800-DHI-TEST, fax (814) 865-3294
 Web site <http://www.dhia.psu.edu>
 Pennsylvania Dairy Herd Improvement Association
 DHIA Service Center, Orchard Road, University Park, PA 16802

It is described as "Test Period Daily Average," and the fourth column is "% Days In Milk."

We also find the same number on the backside of Herd Summary II, where it is also labeled as "Test Period Daily Averages." The fourth column is "% Days In Milk."


Now, let us look at what this number means.

At any given time, your herd has cows that are milking and some that are resting and dry.

Total cows in milking herd, times (multiplied by) the days in the test period, equals the "total cows days" in the test period.

The actual total days that cows were milking is the "milking days"

Dairyman To Dairyman



GEORGE CUDOC

PA DHIA
 Consulting
 Dairyman

QUESTION: What does percent cow days mean? Can we use this number to manage our herd?

ANSWER: Percent cow days can be found several places in reports from PA DHIA. The first place we see this number is on Herd Summary I, which is blue in color.

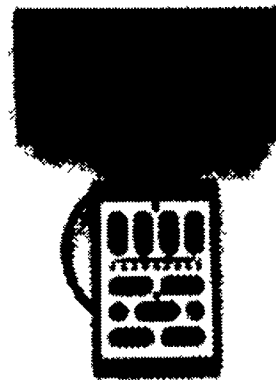
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