

dhia

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DHIA Service Center, Orchard Road, University Park, PA 16802

QUESTION: Our heifers start very slowly at freshening time, while our cows seem to start normally. The same diet is fed to both heifers and cows, so where can we make changes to help our heifers?

ANSWER: Heifer performance can be tracked separately from the rest of the herd.

Look for this separation on both summary reports on your Pa. DHIA records.

Another place that we look at first-lactation animals by themselves is on the Nitrogen Management Analysis Report (commonly referred to as the milk urea nitrogen or MUN report).

The MUN report in this herd shows some interesting numbers.

The first number we look at is the herd average MUN. At 9.3, this herd is somewhat within the normally expected range of 10 to 14.

Certain trends on the report indicate herd management practices.

The first is that a tight range of low to high in MUN values usually tells me this is a TMR-fed herd. Secondly, when the trend is to see MUN values rise as we increase

days in milk, we often find that this is a single ration TMR.

Both trends were seen on this farm.

If we stop here, the only conclusion is that production could be increased if we slightly increase protein feeding in this herd.

The next step in analyzing this herd is to look at numbers on the MUN report that may stand out as being odd.

Here we zero in on the first lactation animals. The average of the group that makes up more than a third of the herd is 9.2.

Again, although this average matches up with the herd average MUN, we need to look further.

(The Pa. DHIA report showed an average MUN for heifers 0-40 days in milk was 5.4, and was 7.3 for those from 41 to 99 days, but jumped up to 9.6 by 100 days and increased until it averaged at 12 for those being milked at 300 days or more.)

It is quite evident in the herd that something is different about heifer performance, especially in early stages of lactation.

I had the opportunity to pay a

Average Farm Feed Costs For Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's last week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania.

Remember, these are averages, so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

- Corn, No.2y — 2.36 bu., 4.22 cwt.
- Wheat, No. 2 — 2.69 bu., 4.49 cwt.
- Barley, No. 3 — 1.54 bu., 3.29 cwt.
- Oats, No. 2 — 1.43 bu., 4.46 cwt.
- Soybeans, No. 1 — 5.02 bu., 8.38 cwt.
- Ear Corn — 68.19 ton, 3.41 cwt.
- Alfalfa Hay — 119.25 ton, 5.96 cwt.
- Mixed Hay — 112.50 ton, 5.62 cwt.
- Timothy Hay — 117.50 ton, 5.87 cwt.

Dairyman To Dairyman

GEORGE CUDOC
PA DHIA
Consulting
Dairyman



visit to this dairy family. Some of my observations were true, when we matched up records with what has happened on the farm.

This is a single ration TMR-fed herd with no separation of heifers from the older cows.

Bunk space was just adequate, with 100 feet of bunk fed both sides, plus one 4-foot wide end, intended to feed a total of 102 cows.

Feeding was twice daily, with cleanup of refusal feed once daily.

The daily pounds of refused feed was about 200. This calculated out to less than 2 percent of the total feed.

Combining what we saw in production trends and MUN analysis with physical observations on the farm, we have these thoughts:

The main problem that is holding back heifer performance is bunk management. Diets that are well-formulated can only work to full potential when cows have access to them without limitation. The thought of saving labor and feed cost by limiting refusal feed to such small amounts will rob cows of production and profit potential.

Now, add to this the fact that heifers must compete with more mature herdmates for feed and we have the current problem.

I once heard that coming to conclusions is our way of wanting to stop thinking about our business. I certainly do not want to stop thinking about my job, so without conclusion I will leave one final thought: The last bite that your cows take is the most profitable bite.

Manage feeding for that.

Berks Holstein Club Sponsors Chain Calf

FLEETWOOD (Berks Co.) — The Berks County Holstein Club will sponsor the 5th Chain Calf contest. Berks County Jr. Holstein members who have not reached their 14th birthday by January 1, 1999 are eligible to participate. The winner will receive a Registered Holstein heifer calf to be used as a project animal in 4-H or FFA.

This year's calf is Granite, daughter of the club's mascot, presented to Andrew Youse during the third Chain Calf contest. Andrew is eager to add a "new link to the chain" when he turns over this heifer.

Contestants are required to fill out a questionnaire and answer a brief question from a panel of three judges.

The contest will be held on Friday, March 26, 1999 at 7 p.m. in the Berks County Agricultural Center near Leesport. Entries are due to Dave Bitler by March 5, 1999. For an application and details, contact Dave Bitler at 610-944-0541.

got milk?

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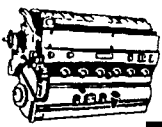
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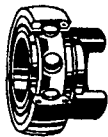
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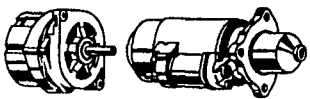
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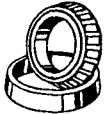
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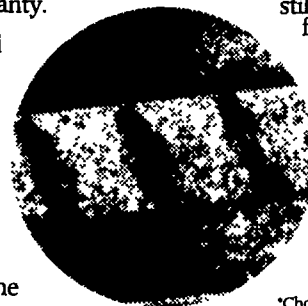
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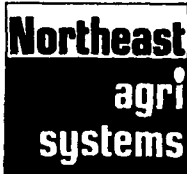
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