

dhia


Scott Williams
Training Coordinator

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

Dairyman To Dairyman

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cows and the older members of the herd.

First, we need to know where to find the information.

Look at your PA DHIA Herd Summary II and drop down to the third section that lists a "Profile of Cows by Lactation Number."

Move across to nearly midway on the page and look at the column labeled, "Avg. Milk to Peak," where there are four numbers listed.

The top number is the pounds milk at peak for first lactation animals.

The second number down is peak milk for second lactation.

The third number is peak milk for the three or more lactation cows.

The last number is the average for all cows in the herd.

Now that we have the information, we can make some evaluations. Cows in their first lactation are peaking at 70 pounds of milk. Cows in second and third lactation are peaking at approximately the same level.

If this were not true, we would need to do the math to determine

the average milk at peak for the two categories.

Older cows are peaking right around 112 pounds.

We expect that within herds, the first lactation peak and that of older cows should be at a 75-percent ratio.

In this herd, we see that this number is much less (70/112 = 62.5%). Using this type of relational evaluation, we see that the first lactation herd is not performing at a level comparative to the older cows under the same management.

When the relational ratio of peak milk between first and later lactations falls below 75 percent, several areas should be looked at.

We want to look at management considerations that affect performance of these new milk cows in the herd. Growth achievement, genetics, and transition periods can affect a young cow's performance well before she has her first calf.

Calving time difficulties may also affect the peak milk performance of these new herd members.

Most of these relationships are well documented, and management practices that address these areas will certainly improve the chances for success with new milking cows.

One area that can influence peak performance and is often overlooked or underplayed in importance is the role of competition with older cows in the herd.

All of the above should be high on our priority list as we raise our future replacements.

Well-managed herds are often caught in this pitfall, especially in freestall setups. Size may not be the problem — these heifers are often very big, but they are still

immature.

Competition for feed due to inadequate bunk space or the time allotted for feeding can hold back these younger animals.

Waiting for space where they can't be intimidated by older cows can mean taking one or several meals less a day than they need.

Water availability can also be compromised and when this happens, feed intakes will be less than optimal.

There are no easy answers to solving pitfalls in dairy management. We in DHIA have an advantage because of available information and the capability of using relationship evaluation.

By taking the time to highlight possible areas of concern within this herd, we have a better chance of solving problems quickly.

We now need to measure some heifers to see if we have met their needs to calve at our target age.

If we did, are the heifers making the transition into milk cows with few problems, and good appetites?

If this is so, then we should devise a scheme that will allow for continued growth, along with high production.

I believe that in group situations, we should address the maturity issue and by doing so, close the gap in performance to the expected 75-percent ratio of peak milk from heifers to older cows.

Where this is done, huge differences can be seen not only in the heifer group, but also in future lactations.

Sometimes we may even see

that we can overcome small glitches in our heifer management by managing these animals in their own group.

How do your heifers stack up? Your PA DHIA records can help show you the answer.

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 — 2.30 bu., 3.84 cwt.
- Barley, No. 3 — 1.34 bu., 2.86 cwt.
- Oats, No. 2 — 1.39 bu., 4.35 cwt.
- Soybeans, No. 1 — 4.04 bu., 6.74 cwt.
- Ear Corn — 71.68 ton, 3.58 cwt.
- Alfalfa Hay — 133.75 ton, 6.69 cwt.
- Mixed Hay — 118.75 ton, 5.94 cwt.
- Timothy Hay — 128.75 ton, 6.44 cwt.

QUESTION: We have expanded from 75 to 100 cows in the past year and our herd is now made up of a heavy concentration of milking 2-year-olds. How can we assess the performance of the herd when we expect that the Rolling Herd Average will go down with more young cows?

ANSWER: The best way to evaluate herd performance as you go through changes in the herd makeup is to look at the peak performance of various lactation numbers.

Since the herd is heavily influenced by 2-year-old production and many of these animals have not yet finished their first lactation, we need to make comparative evaluations between these

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