



dhia

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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?

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 where we can look at first lactation animals by themselves is the Nitrogen Management Analysis Report (commonly called the 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 falls somewhat short of 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 increase protein feeding in this herd slightly.

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

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 visit to this dairy family. Some of my observations were true when we matched up records with what

was happening 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 - 100 feet of bunk fed both sides plus one four foot wide end for 102 total cows. Feeding was twice daily. Cleanup of refusal feed was once daily. Pounds of refusal were about 200 pounds. This calculated out to less than two 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 holding back heifer performance is bunk management. Diets that


are well formulated can only work to full potential when cows have unlimited access to them. 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 herd mates for feed and we have the current problem.

I once heard that arriving at conclusions is our way of wanting to stop thinking about our business. I certainly do not want to stop thinking about my job, so

Dairyman To Dairyman

GEORGE CUDOC

PA DHIA
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without conclusion I will leave you with this thought, "The last bite that your cows take is the most profitable bite." Manage feeding for that!

DIM	NUMBER	MILK	%FAT	%PRO	LOWMUN	HIGHMUN	AVG
0-40	5	42	4.8	3.4	3.4	8.4	5.4 ¹
41-99	6	53	3.4	3.0	5.2	9.4	7.3*
100-199	8	68	3.4	3.1	6.5	11.3	9.6
200-299	7	66	3.7	3.3	6.8	11.8	9.4
300+	9	60	4.1	3.6	8.6	14.5	12.0
AVG/TOT	35	59	3.8	3.3	3.4	14.5	9.2

County Accepts Acreage Reports

YORK (York Co) - The York County Farm Service Agency (FSA) is accepting 2000 crop acreage reports.

The 1996 Farm Bill removed the acreage report requirement in most cases for county farmers to remain eligible for USDA benefits. However,

the commodity loan program and loan deficiency payment program still requires that filed acreage reports by those who wish to pledge stored commodities as collateral for these nine-month loans.

Producers interested in reporting must visit the county office, review

aerial photographs and indicate the location of their crops. The office is located at 170 Pleasant Acres Road in York. Appointments are encouraged. Call ahead to have the aerial photos mailed to you to mark at home. This will significantly reduce time spent in the office.

Final certification dates are:
May 1 - hay
June 15 - wheat, barley and oats and
July 15 - corn, soybeans, fruit, and vegetables

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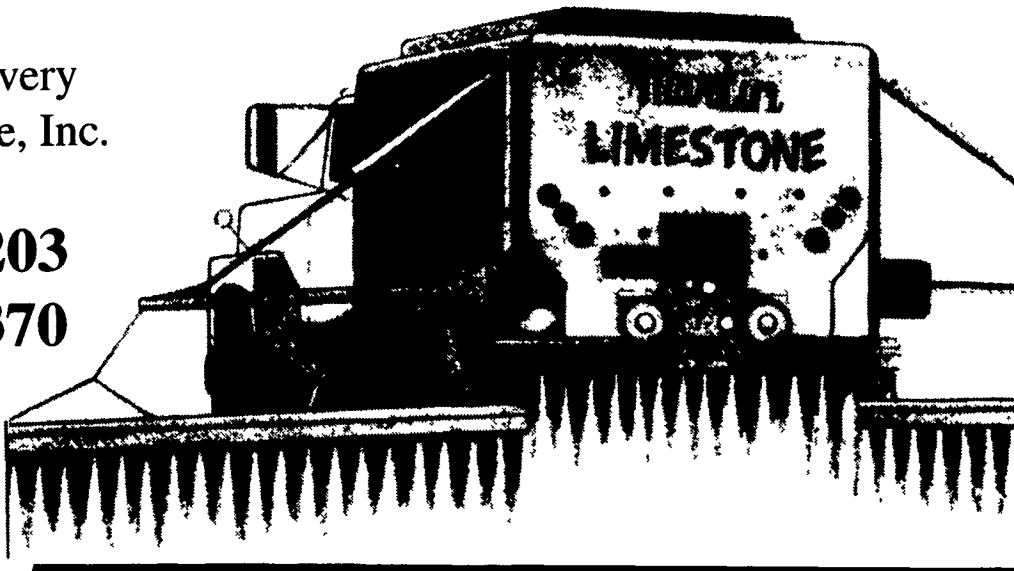
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