

dhia


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Dairyman To Dairyman

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time four years ago, a total of 178 new two-year-olds entered the herd out of the heifer-growing program. I calculated the average age at first calving for all 178 heifers to be 25.7 months. This has not changed significantly from two years earlier when the average age at first calving was 25.9 months.

Current DHIA test day records indicate that of these same 178 animals, 106 remain in the herd today. The 72 animals that have been culled from this group since May 1997 tally to 39.9% of the total. Just looking at these culled animals I calculate the average age at first calving to be 26.1

Question: Has reducing the age at first calving in our herd led to higher culling rates?

To answer this question I looked back to a time period between May 1997 and May 1998. I wanted to see how many cows are still in the herd that calved for the first time then. During that

months. I looked further and found that the 106 animals that remain in the herd from this group today had an average age at first calving of 25.4 months. This is a bit younger than both the culled animals and the average for the whole group of 178. We have no reason to suspect that the age at first calving has had any influence on the cull rates.

One interesting fact that I came across while looking at these numbers is the culling rate of animals that never reached their second lactation. Of the 72 culled animals, 45 (63.4%) were culled sometime during their first lactation. This converts to a 25% cull rate of the first lactation animals during this single year. A lot of pressure is now on survivability of older cows just to maintain reasonable cull rates and not to lower cow numbers.

The economic pressure that these numbers put on the herd is anyone's guess right now. Some local sales report grade Holsteins bringing \$1800 to \$2500 per head. Even at a very conservative \$1500 and beef cow prices of \$600, a 40% cull rate will add

\$1.44 to the production cost of producing milk. To calculate this we take the market value of replacements and subtract the salvage value of cows and multiply that by the percent culling rate. We then divide this by the milk production per cow in hundred weights, ex. ((1500-600) X 40%) / (25,000RHA/100). We could reduce this replacement cost to \$1.19 per cwt. milk if the

cull rate was reduced to 33%.

Plug in your own numbers and see the cost of culling on your farm. One thing is certain, losing 25% of the animals that have not paid for their growing costs will lead to economic hardships or maybe worse. We need to search the reasons behind the culling rate in able to reduce it. How do we do that? Yes, you guessed it, **RECORDS!!!**

Chicken Survey: Each Person Consumes 81 Pounds Per Year

MODESTO, Calif. — The boom in chicken consumption in recent years still has room to grow, according to research released recently by the National Chicken Council (NCC) and the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY.)

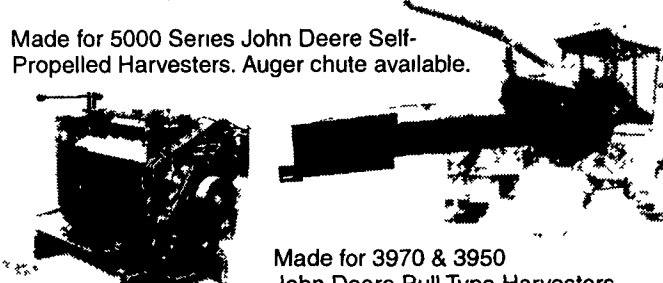
American consumers are eating an unprecedented 81 pounds of chicken per person this year and plan to purchase even more chicken in the months to come, according to the survey which was released in conjunction with a food writers convention in Las Vegas.

California Poultry Federation President Bill Mattos, who attended the conference, said chicken enjoys the highest per capita consumption of any of the major meats, with beef in second place at 69 pounds per person and pork at 52 pounds. The survey found that 89 percent of the respondents ate chicken at least once a week and some 36 percent consumed chicken three times or more per week. A net of seven percent indicated they planned to eat even more chicken purchased at supermarkets and food stores in the next 12 months.

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