

APPLICATION OF DHIA RECORDS TO
HERD MANAGEMENT FOR INCREASING
PROFITS

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Until recently, an individual might operate his dairy farm with little planning and few records. Today, however, the professional dairyman must use the skills, techniques, and management principles that other industrialists use. With narrowing profit margins more exact information is required. The computer processed DHIA report of today provides much of the needed information.

DHIA testing has passed the test of time. Since 1905 DHIA records, when used, have proven to be an investment with a high rate of return for each dollar spent. Higher production is indicative of higher profits. The average DHIA cow in the nation produces 4,500 pounds more milk than the non-DHIA cow. At \$4.00 per hundred this yields \$180.00 per cow.

Some of the areas of DHIA record use are given below. The list is by no means complete.

1. Culling - If the lowest producers are removed from the herd and replaced with better cows, the level of production rises. Low producing cows can be spotted because there is full information on production. Cows differ. It is not possible to spot the low producers especially in large operations without records. Increased production obtained by culling can more than pay the testing costs.
2. Feeding - Records indicate how to feed according to production needs. Feeding according to production, either on an individual or group basis, can save money. Also, as production increases the higher producers convert feed into milk more profitably than low producers.
3. Selection - The heifer of today is the cow of tomorrow. Herd replacements should come from the higher producing cows. Records identify the higher producers. Selection is the major genetic tool for use in herd improvement. Every 4 to 5 years on the average the herd is a new group of animals as usually 20 to 25 percent of the cows are removed each year.
4. Reproductive Performance - A 12½ months calving interval is desirable. High reproductive rate is necessary for maximum milk flow. It has been estimated that from 50¢ to over \$1.00 is lost for each day open after 100 days. In a herd averaging 130 days open (13½ months calving interval) at 60¢ per day this represents a loss of \$18.00 per cow. Present records provide an indication of problem cows. However, this fall the revised reports will provide even greater help.

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5. Sire Evaluation - Young sires must be evaluated. DHIA testing now provides the only evaluation data. The present sire evaluation program, started in 1935 by the USDA, is the best ever. The wise use of great sires, evaluated through DHIA testing, increased the genetic base. Florida dairymen with the largest percentage of cows bred by AI in the nation, have much to be gained in helping with the sire evaluation program.
6. Management - The central idea of management is to make every decision or action help achieve a desired goal. Increasing profits is a desired goal. Dairymen have a heavy investment. By using records and sound judgment the manager can put emphasis where most likely to obtain positive results. Management involves pulling the right string at the right time. Records help indicate the string and the time.

The DHIA record is not an end in itself but a means to an end. Records to be of value must be understood and used. They are used mainly for making on-the-farm decisions with greater knowledge of the situation. Lastly, record keeping adds greater interest in the work.