

HOW THE NEW MACHINE DHIA RECORDS HELP ME IN HERD MANAGEMENT

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When Mr. Reaves asked me to be on this program I thought, "Me & My Big Mouth". Quite some time ago I said at a meeting that when we were in financial trouble a year or so ago, we felt that the \$200 plus that it cost us monthly for testing was something that we didn't want to do without.

I guess the best way to tell how we use DHIA records is to take it step by step. As soon as the tester gets a "herd" weighed I take the sheets and check all cows with less than 17 lbs. Next I check this list against the breeding book. If she is 6 months bred, she goes to dry pasture. Then I check those that are left against the day book to see if she was sick, in heat, or some other reason for the poor production. If this doesn't give me the reason, I then ask the tester if he noticed anything unusual about the cow. He often notices things such as nervous, won't eat, or something else. Then I ask the man that milked her. Finally I check her lifetime record. Perhaps this is her off year. If I haven't found a good reason she goes to market, unless she is a heifer. We keep them and give them another chance. You have to give a gal a chance!

When we get ready to breed a cow that we want a heifer from, we check her record to see what we want: more milk or better butterfat test. The last couple of years we have been trying to raise the butterfat. As we use the three studs, we can pick out two or three bulls. We look at the cow to see what we want to improve. With some of our Jerseys, their udders were put on backward. So with them we try to use a bull that will improve this. (I refer to Dr. Wilcox's remark that you don't need to pay any attention to the type when picking a herd sire). If it is a cow that we aren't too crazy about a heifer from, we use a Red Dane or Brown Swiss. We have some heifers from this cross and they are big raw boned animals. If she doesn't turn out good, it isn't as hard to sell her.

We like the DHIA records very much. There are some changes that we would like to see. A little color in the action code would make it easier to pick out what you are checking. They tell me that isn't possible. I like the Heifer Sheets as this way you don't lose any information. Then too, it seems as though with them it would be easier to register calves. I like to compare the amount of feed that we allot a cow and what she should have. We would like to see the income over feed cost on a monthly basis.