

## EFFECTIVE USE OF DHIA AS SEEN BY A DHIA SUPERVISOR

by Herbert Wright, West Coast DHIA Supervisor, Bradenton

Good records are more important today than ever before, with the rising cost of producing the finished product, in order to keep milk competitive with substitutes. Through DHIA we think we have one of the best management tools there is today to help with this.

With the help of many people and hard work, we are striving to help the dairyman help himself by providing him with the guides for breeding, feeding, culling and many management factors to help him constantly improve. This is based on the accuracy of the information reported by the dairymen to the supervisor along with the milk weights and butterfat tests taken by the supervisor and the records processed at Raleigh, N. C.

DHIA records are used by many people other than the dairyman. But the dairyman is the one who gains in the end.

Feed is the largest cost item. The feed available for milk production is that over and above maintenance requirements. And feed fed beyond this requirement and that is not used for producing milk does not return a profit. When the supervisor visits your dairy he reports all feed and roughage fed to cows. This information plus milk production, % fat, body weight plus stage of pregnancy of animals is all computed at the processing center. The record when returned will indicate if the cow is over fed or under fed. So you can use records as a feed guide for individual or group feeding.

Another big expense today is replacements. A dairyman replaces about 25 to 30 percent or more of his milking herd every year. Your records are a good guide for culling cows. Your cows are coded according to your own herd. A B C D E. This is a guide for culling cows according to production, based on the projected 305 day mature equivalent records.

- A - Production above 110 percent of herd breed average
- B - Production from 100 to 110 percent of herd breed average
- C - Production from 90 to 100 percent of herd breed average
- D - Production from 80 to 90 percent of herd breed average
- E - Production less than 80 percent of herd breed average

DHIA records provide important information necessary to evaluate the genetic potential of dairy sires. This is important if we are going to increase the potential of our replacements. Only about 20% of the cows in the U.S. are on DHIA. Only about 45% of this 20% are identified as to sire. Therefore, records from only about 9% of the cows in the U.S. are available for sire proving and evaluation. Through proper identification of cows and increase in herds on DHIA this percentage could be increased. The faster the genetic potential of both outstanding and undesirable sires could be determined the faster the improvement.

Through the Processing Center we are now receiving a good Calf Identification sheet so all heifers born are identified, both the sire and dam, birth date and how it is identified so when a replacement comes into the milking herd she can be properly identified at the first test period after she has calved. This will result in correct evaluations of sires in your herd.

This year the records provide you with some new management factors, which can be of real value to the dairyman.

You can now get a list of cows preprinted from the processing center showing the cows to be bred in order of the number of days they have been in milk. There is a list that shows the cows due to calve within the next 60 days in order so that you can start lead feeding, also helps to determine if you are going to have enough cows to produce the amount of milk you need or if you are going to have to buy some replacements.

You also get a list of cows to be dried off in order of expected calving date so she can get her necessary rest. These lists can be extremely helpful in the larger herds we have today. In the larger herds we are getting too many cows going to beef because of reproduction problems. A good calving interval is important. By good use of your records and the information supplied you, this calving interval can be decreased. Too many dry cows and strippers rob us of profits. One dairy I test has put this list of cows due and past due up in the barn where his help can see it. He is getting more cows bred now than before.

With good use and proper understanding of your records it is possible for a dairyman to milk less cows and maintain higher production than ever before. This will result in less investment in both cows and labor. Most men milking today will take pride in milking good cows. I think records are important to the man milking the cow. If you have a man interested in the records he is going to do a better job. One of the top herds in our Association is being milked by a man who asks every month to see his records. We take a few minutes and discuss what his cows are doing. I think every dairyman could benefit from doing this.

The permanent identification that goes along with DHIA I think is important to a large herd owner, where it is impossible for him to know each cow. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to see that each cow is permanently identified along with her barn number or neck chain. I know of one occasion where the herd owner made a list of cows he wanted to go to beef, gave it to the man milking so they could hold the cow up. If the milker had a cow he did not like he would change the neck chain to the cow, so consequently some good cows were sent to beef. Now this dairyman checks the eartag on each cow before she goes on the truck.

I had a dairyman who thought he could get along without DHIA records, so he quit for about 5 months. One day he called and said he would like to get back on. In the one year four months that he has been back on DHIA he has brought his herd average up from just over 7,800 pounds to 10,000 pounds. I heard a man ask him one day what this cost him. He said, "It doesn't cost, it pays". I know a good banker who likes DHIA records too.

I think every DHIA Supervisor in the state of Florida will take time to sit down and go over the records with any dairyman on DHIA or any one interested in DHIA. A supervisor must believe in the DHIA and the records to put in the long hours and hard work that it takes to get all the necessary milk samples, run the butterfat and prepare the records for the processing center. Only by good management and hard work, the dairyman today is going to stay in the dairy business.