

Farm/Herd Report - Wisconsin

U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center - Annual Dairy Operations Report January 1999

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1998 has been a very good year at the farm. Favorable weather with adequate moisture and moderate temperatures coupled with favorable milk production and prices has made for smooth sailing throughout the year. Herd size has increased slightly from what it was a year ago, however, planned culling will maintain the milking herd in the 350 cow range. Calf mortality remains very low in our herd and even though we have sold a few heifer calves which were very small at birth, herd replacement numbers are up. This should increase our culling abilities or perhaps provide some marketing opportunities in the future. Current average milk production per cow per day is 74.6 pounds. Our DHIA rolling herd averages for milk, fat and protein decreased somewhat during the year but is now on the upswing with numbers similar to those of a year ago. The farm "mailbox" net price received per hundred weight of milk ranged from \$12.58 to \$17.53 with an average of \$16.48 for 1998.

A number of our cows have received special recognition this year by the Holstein Association and DHIA for their performance. In addition, a few daughters of young sires have been receiving a lot of attention by some of the bull studs. In 1998 we contracted the sale of a bull calf from one of our cows to Accelerated Genetics for \$3500.

Cull cattle prices have generally remained low during 1998. Bull calf prices on the open market have remained extremely low. In 1997 we received an average of \$34.97 per calf for our bull calves. In 1998 we began marketing our calves through a new program initiated by the local Cooperative. They are purchasing all bull calves weighing 80 pounds and over for \$63.00 plus a \$10.00 coupon which can be used for feed purchases at the Co-op. Calves are taken to contract growers. This program has added significantly to our cattle sales income; however 1998 revenues lag behind last year's total.

Research activities in the dairy operation continued at a high level in 1998 with 408 animals involved in 15 different experiments during the year. A cooperative project was undertaken in 1998 with the USDA Livestock Behavior Research Unit at Purdue University. Approximately 20 calves were used in a tail-docking/fly avoidance experiment at the farm.

In last year's report I announced the initiation of a cooperative program with Trans-Ova Genetics. During the year we have collected and sold colostrum from more than 200 cows to Trans-Ova. In addition, we have sold cull cows to them for use in their program. Revenues from this program totaled more than \$10,000. The leukosis free status and the potentially Johnne's free status of our closed herd is of keen interest to transgenic dairy development groups. Future developments could be interesting!

A new cooperative program was started this year with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. We assist the Milk Standards Unit by providing milk from select cows in the herd to be used as standards for instrument calibration and daily performance controls for dairy plants throughout the state. It's a small project but it generates good relationships.

Numerous facility improvements were made in 1998. A new tile floor was installed in the milkroom and a new computer controlled clean-in-place wash system was purchased for the milking equipment. Two years ago we installed a sprinkling cooling system for the cows in our free-stall facility. Although it worked well, I felt it could be improved if fans could be added to provide more evaporative cooling. When the UW Graduate School and the All Campus Animal Care and Use Committee undertook an animal facilities improvement initiative, I submitted a proposal to add fans to our system. My request was approved and the

\$5300 cost was split by the Graduate School and CALS. New drive-by feed bunks on gravel pads were constructed at two of our pasture lots. These feeding areas greatly reduced feeding time and pasture destruction around the feeding areas.

During the year the Agricultural Research Stations Department received permission to hire Experimental Farm Laborers using a critical recruitment procedure which streamlined the hiring system. The system seems to work well and the dairy crew is currently fully staffed.

Herd Statistics		Change from previous year
<i>Herd Inventory</i>		
Milking cows	314	+34
Dry cows	41	-16
average cow age	46 months	+1
percent first lactation	35%	-6
percent second lactation	29%	+2
percent third lactation	17%	0
percent greater than third	17%	+2
Herd replacements	339	+24
Total	694	+42
Rumen Fistulated Cows	22	0
<i>Herd Performance</i>		
Cows calved	391	+58
Heifer calves live	181	+21
Heifer calves born dead	25	+12
Bull calves born live	169	-12
Bull calves born dead	39	+25
Heifer calves died < 1 year old	2 (1.1%)	-2
DHIA rolling herd average		
milk	21,889 lbs	-579
protein	692 lbs.	-28
fat	810 lbs.	-66
Milk sold in 1998	6,986,355 lbs.	+48,584
Heifer calves sold	14	-3
Bull calves sold	169	-11
Cows sold	106	-38
cows culled for:		
reproduction problems	25	-18
poor production	9	-6
poor udder	19	-8
poor feet and legs	9	-2
mastitis	29	-2
other	15	-2
Cattle sales revenue	\$62,475.52	-10,079.91
<i>Herd Reproduction</i>		
Average days open	120	-5
Average calving interval	12.95 months	-.04
Average services per conception	2.1	-.5
Average age at first calving	24 months	0