

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

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Herd Statistics		Change from previous year
<i>Herd Inventory</i>		
Milking cows	300	0
Dry cows	50	+15
average cow age	45 months	0
percent first lactation	41%	- 5
percent second lactation	29%	+ 8
percent third lactation	15%	+ 1
percent greater than third	15%	- 2
Herd replacements	315	- 5
Total	665	+ 10
Rumen fistulated cows	32	
<i>Herd Performance</i>		
Cows calved	368	+ 2
Heifer calves born	160 live + 17 dead	(+ 5)
Bull calves born	179 live + 18 dead	(- 5)
Heifer calves died < 1 year old	3 (1.87%)	
DHIA rolling herd average		
milk	20,337 lbs.	+ 429
protein	651 lbs.	+ 30
fat	747 lbs.	+ 19
Milk sold in 1996	6,298,921 lbs.	+ 84,909
Heifer calves sold	9	- 5
Bull calves sold	179	- 9
Cows sold	131	- 12
Cows culled for:		
reproduction problems	43	+ 1
poor production	14	- 7
poor udder	20	+ 1
poor feet and legs	9	- 9
mastitis	23	+ 11
injury	5	0
other	17	+ 4
Cattle sales revenue	\$54,958.93	- 14,241.07
<i>Herd Reproduction</i>		
Average days open	123	+ 9
Average calving interval	13.02 months	+ .27
Average services per conception	2.1	- .4
Average age at first calving	24 months	- 1

The 1996 USDFRC dairy herd activities can best be described as "business as usual." Numbers of mature cows in the herd increased by 15 while the present number of herd replacements on hand is down by five. Overall animal numbers are up

slightly from a year ago. Milk production has increased in 1996. Our DHIA rolling herd average for milk is at an all time high of 20,337 pounds. Current average production per cow per day is 73 pounds. The farm "mailbox" net price

received per hundred weight of milk ranged from \$13.811 to \$16.907 in 1996. Higher production coupled with favorable prices during most of the year resulted in increased milk revenues. Cattle prices, however, have remained very weak in 1996. It was not uncommon to net less than \$5.00 for an 80 pound bull calf after associated sale and trucking costs at conventional cattle markets. Consequently, some bull calves were sold directly from the farm to area individuals to avoid sales costs and increase net cattle sales revenues.

Research activities with the herd continued at a high level in 1996 with 370 milking animals involved in 14 different trials. With increased cattle numbers and research activities, the dairy operation felt the effects of last year's reduction in staff. Although modifications and elimination of some work tasks have helped to streamline the work flow and allow us to meet the basic needs of the operation, there is a certain attention to details that has declined somewhat. This decline is haunting us in the form of poorer overall facility cleanliness, animal cleanliness and associated animal health issues. Time to give attention to all research trial details is also limited, and I feel that the overall support we are able to give to the research mission is less than it has been in the past. These developments have initiated action to add one full time employee back into the dairy operation.

Improvement and expansion projects for 1996 were also somewhat limited by the labor shortage. The new feed pad and manure handling system which were added at the hay storage shed in 1995 are working well for winter housing of 75 heifers and dry cows. Plans have been drawn and bids are in place to construct a free stall facility for 48 animals adjacent to the hay shed. These animals will be bedded with sand and will utilize the same feed pad area. The cattle mound has been relocated to make space for the new facility. The modification of the free stalls in the existing facility to improve cow comfort which was started in 1995 has not yet been completed

due to lack of labor. This project remains on the plans for 1996.

Two changes are taking place in the milking operations. An order has been written to upgrade our milk meters, samplers and associated software. The new system will reduce maintenance cost, improve clean-in-place washing, improve sampling procedures, and increase accuracy. The other change in the system is a cooperative project with Dairy Equipment Company, the University of Wisconsin milking lab and Wisconsin Power and Light. This project involves the installation and evaluation of a variable speed vacuum pump system.

A significant management change made in 1996 was to divide and feed the dry cows in two separate groups. One group is for recently dry cows while the other is for cows due to calve in three to four weeks. This practice has significantly decreased incidence of milk fever and displaced abomasums in our herd.

The farm continues to be a popular place to visit and we continue to host many local, national and international guests each year. In 1996 an extra outreach effort was made to increase the visibility of the farm and make better use of the new conference room. Some of the activities hosted were: Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin Dairy Skills Workshop; Monsanto-Protiva Dairy Improvement Tour; Gromark Dairy Feed Salespeople Workshop; Sauk County Holstein Association Twilight Meeting.

The state of the dairy operation in 1996 has meant that many of the employees have had to put in extra time and effort not to mention alter their personal plans for time off to "get the job done." Many of these efforts are beyond the call of duty. I encourage the USDA-ARS, USDFRC and the University of Wisconsin to join me in recognition and appreciation of their efforts. I also extend my appreciation to the USDFRC field operation's crew for their assistance with chores and special projects throughout the year.