

DAIRY PIPELINE

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ALL BREED ANIMAL MODEL IS A MAJOR CHANGE

For all the years that bull proofs and cow indexes have been published by USDA, each dairy breed has been analyzed alone. No genetic or environmental information of any kind from other breeds was used. This policy ended with the May 2007 proofs, with the introduction of the “all breed” animal model. From this point on, records from all the different breeds as well as properly identified crossbred cows will be analyzed together.

This change doesn't cause the published bull proofs to change very much, as the “all breed” evaluations are converted to a within breed scale before publication. However, the system makes better use of the information available to evaluate purebred animals, and generates proofs for crossbreds at the same time. A daughter of a Jersey bull out of a Holstein dam will now receive a genetic evaluation. At the same time, her performance will affect the proofs of both her Jersey sire and her Holstein dam.

The breed of the sire determines which breed base will be used to evaluate the crossbred

cow, so in this case, her evaluation will be relative to the Jersey breed. Herds with two or

more breeds of purebred cows – a Holstein-Jersey or Holstein- Brown Swiss mix for instance – may see some larger changes in evaluations of those purebred cows.

Cows of the “other” breed now serve as contemporaries, helping to evaluate environmental conditions in the herd. In cases where only a few animals of one breed are in a herd, contemporary deviations can change quite a bit in the process. There are large breed differences in genetic merit for production traits, with Holsteins leading the way. On the other hand, Jerseys are clear leaders for productive life and daughter pregnancy rate. Ayrshires and Brown Swiss are the leaders for somatic cell score.

The all breed animal model will help producers interested in crossbreeding make better predictions of crossbred performance of different breeds. Of at least equal importance, the system will allow us to predict the performance of daughters of specific bulls when crossed on another breed.

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—Bennet Cassell

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DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR DRY COWS

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Most farms experience an increase in problems with fresh cows every summer. Following are the most common reasons and simple remedies:

1. Increased number of dry cows: Due to the difficulty in getting cows pregnant during the summer, a disproportionate number will become pregnant from October through December. This fact leads to a large number of cows in the dry lot from May through July. It is important to ensure that your facilities are set up to handle the number of dry cows you

will have during the summer (especially feed bunk space).

2. Heat stress: Dry cows suffer from heat stress too. Dry matter intake can be significantly reduced by heat stress. Many dairy farms have made little or no provisions for heat abatement in their dry cows. Recent research has shown a direct correlation between negative energy balance pre-calving and likelihood of cows developing retained placenta and metritis post-calving. In addition to decreased dry matter intake, these heat stressed cows also

Upcoming Activities

June 11 – Hoof Care Field Day – Weyers Cave

June 20th – Pasture Walk at the Dan Leubben Farm – Centreville

June 22nd – June Dairy Month Night at Veterans Stadium – Harrisonburg

June 27th – June is Dairy month Night at Moxie Stadium - Staunton

Contact the Rockingham County office at (540) 564-3080 for details on the dates above.

If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services or other accommodations for any Extension event, please discuss your accommodation needs with the Extension staff at your local Extension office at least 1 week prior to the

expend a significant amount of energy to cool themselves. Remember to monitor the nutrition of your dry cows.

3. Summer workload: Summer is a very busy time of year for dairy farmers and it is easy to forget about the dry cows. By spending more time managing dry cows now, you will be making a small invest-

ment in time that can pay huge dividends in the future by cutting down on the number of sick fresh cows and enabling cows to produce more milk for their lactation.

–John Currin
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NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH

As we come to yet another June perhaps it is time to reflect on the purpose and effectiveness of the “June is Dairy Month” effort. The effort by dairymen to encourage greater use of dairy products dates back to 1937. Originally it was termed National Milk Month but by 1939 it had acquired the familiar name “June is Dairy Month.” Over the years many slogans have been used to plug dairy products. 60 years ago, in 1947, the slogan was “30 days for ADA”, somewhat similar to the “3-a-Day” slogan used today. Over time the goal has been the same and was perhaps best summed up in 1947 as “sales not surplus.”

This begs the question as to how effective our promotional efforts and the June is Dairy month efforts have been. The structure of the dairy industry has changed from one of local supply and demand to national and now global implications. One could hardly look at the current situation and surmise that

“Local promotional events during ‘June is Dairy Month’ help remind consumers that dairy products deserve a spot in their food budget.”

our promotional activities have kept up with the Nation’s ability to produce milk. On the flip side, what would it be like if the dairy industry had chosen to do nothing? It is easy to assume that foods that are a staple of the American diet will stay there over time. Clearly this is not the case. For example how many ads for lamb have you seen lately, how many of you have actually eaten lamb in the last year?

Dairy products have to compete for their spot in the diets of consumers. June also happens to be National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month, National Ice Tea month, National Seafood Month and National Soul Food Month.

Local promotional events during June is Dairy Month help remind consumers that dairy products deserve a spot in their food budget. They also foster good will towards local dairymen and agriculture in general. Contact your local dairy extension agent to get involved with a project in your area.

–John Welsh,
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Photo courtesy of webshots.com

For more information on Dairy Extension or to learn about current programs, visit us at VT Dairy—Home of the Dairy Extension Program on the web at: www.vtdairy.dasc.vt.edu.

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