



DAIRYINFO

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Taking service to another level!

To cull or not to cull (I)

One of the most difficult aspects of farming is culling. It may be a necessary part of doing business; however, it is often very costly. Tracking the reasons for culling is important. It allows you to develop a more accurate scope of what is happening, and evaluate the relationship of factors such as nutrition and management. When possible, effectively reducing cull rates can save money that might be better spent in other areas. Researchers at The Pennsylvania State University (*Tozer/Heinrichs*) found that if cull rates are reduced from 25% to 20%, the cost for replacement heifers is reduced by 24.6%. Conversely, they found that by increasing the cull rate to 30% there was a deficit of 4 heifers. The conclusion is simple: reducing involuntary cull rates significantly improves profitability. Culling often results from one of the following:

- **Retained placenta:** The placenta has not been passed within 12 hours after calving. This represents a potential beginning for metritis and infertility.
- **Milk Fever:** A metabolic disorder of mature dairy cows that occurs just before or soon after calving, due to a lack of calcium in their system and predisposes to other health concerns.
- **Ketosis:** A metabolic disorder created by a negative energy balance, which decreases feed intake and increases the risk of other diseases. This is best treated by prevention in the transition and fresh cow diets.
- **Displaced Abomasum (DA):** A disease typically affecting fresh cows, characterized by a distended abomasum abnormally positioned in the abdomen.
- **Mastitis:** Inflammation or infection of the mammary gland, typically caused by infectious agents (usually bacterial). Can impact production short-term or long-term.
- **Dystocia:** A difficult birth or delivery, which may have several different causes.
- **Twins:** Two offspring produced in the same pregnancy.
- **Death:** Due to a variety of reasons, including age.
- **Lameness:** A weakness or inflammation in limb(s) or joint(s) causing gait-altering pain and discomfort.
- **Injury:** Harm or hurt; a wound or maim; usually inflicted on the body by an external force.
- **Metritis:** Inflammation or infection of the uterus, which may have a severe systemic component, either as toxemia or septicemia.

Prevention and knowledge is often the best remedy for many cull conditions. By tracking cull rates you can help identify, reduce and/or eliminate many causes [of culling] that are costing you productivity and profitability. Ask for information on ways and means to reduce culls

in your dairy herd, as well as tracking causes. It can make a difference! (*More information in next edition.*)

MAKING MONEY... from the field to the bank!

As the dairy industry becomes faster paced, with multi-million dollar production facilities and ever-increasing rolling-herd averages, it is easy to forget what the base of our industry is. Farming is simply cultivating land, converting energy (primarily solar) into products for human consumption. Cows only add value to these products (crops). Simply stated, it is converting crops to milk as efficiently as possible. A single approach is not necessarily the most efficient for every farm. Agronomy is no different than nutrition in that respect. As nice as it is to “cookie cut” corn, alfalfa, and soybeans (etc.) programs on every farm, it is often not the most efficient way to make milk from every acre. Thankfully, there are numerous crops to utilize. Thinking “outside the box” can make it easier to make milk and lower purchased feed costs. Maybe you have a herd that has limited acreage and is forced to buy forage. BMR Sorghum-Sudangrass or double cropping may help you get the tonnage needed, while lowering purchased feed costs. If cutting timeliness or forage storage are limitations, switching crops may offer a wider harvest window or be better suited to your farm’s storage structures.

The fundamental thing to remember is a forage program needs to maximize profitability; the end result of any crop needs to be dollars in the bank. BMR corn can pay dividends in the right circumstances, but it can significantly reduce profits if improperly positioned or used on the wrong farm. What are the limiting factors of your farm’s profits – available land, soil types, labor? To identify these factors, you (the person responsible for converting crops to milk) need to take a critical look at the whole farm, even the agronomic side. Tracking milk production back to the seed it started from can help improve productivity and bottom line profitability.

Ask me about available hybrids and species, agronomic information, our unique **REN-YIELD** product and how to optimize forage in your nutritional program for results.

SPRING – almost here!

It will soon be time to plant. We can provide insights & information to assist seed and forage considerations.

W-S FEED... plan for quality!

*Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call us today.
Our goal and commitment is to help you!!*

VOLUME 4 – Number 3 – March 2014

THE TEAM FOR RESULTS

SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS

IMPROVING RESULTS!

Planning Ahead..

Spring will soon be here, at least according to the calendar, and we will turn our attention to plowing, planting, and cleaning the barn/farmyard after months of procrastination due to snow and ice. It is also time to start thinking and making specific plans to cope with heat stress and its potential impact on your livestock. This includes facilities and management considerations, use of cooling systems, as well as nutrition and ration adjustments. At W-S, we have the products, techniques and tips to help you address any nutritional challenges, helping to maintain and improve dry matter intakes, and keep your cows from the ups-and-downs that heat stress often brings. Be proactive this spring, while planning for summer... and think cool with W-S Feed!

Farm safety & spring planting!

Many states feature a "Farm Safety Week" in the month of March ~ an opportunity to focus on the critical need for safety at all levels on and around the farm. Paying attention to details of safety is critical to you and everyone who works on your farm. We often think that our farm is a safe place, an assumption based on the fact that we are conscious of the need for farm safety combined with the possible fact that there has rarely or never been an accident or injury on your farm. Farm safety is a complex issue on any farming operation, regardless of the farm size! Have you developed a "safety protocol" for your farm? This should include the use and operation of all machinery and equipment, stating concerns and cautions. How about livestock handling procedures; working around chemicals and manure handling systems; feed storage units; electrical systems; accessibility [by children, especially] to all aspects of the farm; and more? We might even add elements of biosecurity to this list. While a written, posted policy and procedure statement may not eliminate accidents, it can certainly help in keeping everyone who works and visits your farm more informed about safety expectations. Take a few moments to consider safety on your farm now and as we progress toward planting and more. Have a safe, productive spring... along with the rest of 2014!



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CHECK IT OUT!