



Prospering In The Dairy Business

Griswold's DHIA Tell-all Twelve: The twelve numbers on the DHIA-202 report that I look at to evaluate the production management of a dairy farm. None of these numbers make a dairy farm profitable, but every one of these numbers can affect the profitability of a dairy farm. These numbers are grouped together by management area for ease of explanation. However, they are all interconnected (i.e. changes in one number can change other numbers in the list) with some more strongly connected than others. IN SMALL HERDS, A FEW COWS CAN HAVE MAJOR AFFECTS ON THESE NUMBERS, AND THEREFORE, INITIAL JUDGEMENTS BASED ON THESE NUMBERS MUST BE EVALUATED USING MORE STRINGENT TESTS.

GENERAL:

Cull rate (% cows left herd): Industry average = 33%, Suggested goal: < 30%

Days Dry – All Lactations: Industry goal range: 45 to 60 days.

Average Age in Months at 1st Calving: The goal is 22 – 24 months of age at 1st calving.

PRODUCTION:

Days in Milk (DIM): DIM normally ranges from 150 to 220. Industry goal = 150 - 170 DIM.

Daily milk per lactating cow: Industry suggested goals: 2x, no BST = 70 lbs./cow/day; 2x, BST = 77 lbs./cow/day; 3x, no BST = 77 lbs./cow/day; 3x, BST = 85 lbs./cow/day.

Daily percent fat: Holstein herds should have a minimum average of 3.5 % fat through the year. Dips below 3.3% should not be tolerated for more than one month.

Daily percent protein: Holstein herds normally average 3.0% protein through the year. Milk protein % does not fluctuate as wildly as milkfat %, but dips below 2.9% should not be tolerated for more than one month.

UDDER HEALTH or MILK QUALITY:

SCC Actual – All Cows: The goal is < 200,000. The industry average in Lancaster County is 332,000. Yearly SCC actual averages below 200,000 are excellent. SCC actual between 200,000 and 400,000 warrants a review of milking management practices. SCC actual greater than 400,000 represents a significant loss of income to the dairy farmer.

REPRODUCTION:

Days Open (Projected minimum): The number of days since calving that cow is not pregnant. The goal is a projected minimum average of 115 days open, which is based on 70 days to first service and 2 breedings per pregnancy.

Calving Interval (Projected minimum): The goal is a projected minimum of 12.5 – 13.0. Averages of 13.5 or below are generally considered satisfactory.

Average Days to 1st Service: The goal is 70 days.

Pregnancy Rate: This 12 month number equals the heat detection % multiplied by the conception rate %, and represents the overall success of a breeding program. In small herds, this number will fluctuate widely. A 12 month average of 20% or greater is considered excellent. The industry average is 15%.