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# DHI reports: better data, better decisions

It's not glamorous. It's not sexy. But, it has lots of bells and whistles. Today's Dairy Herd Information (DHI) records still provide tried and true milk production, component and SCC information, but that's not where it ends. Milk testing options and frequency are almost endless, with results shedding light on important management factors, such as reproduction, benchmarking, metabolic and disease information, and culling considerations.

Today's DHIA is not a one-size-fits-all system. DHI affiliates offer flexible testing programs that are accurate, reliable and innovative.

DHI testing is more important than ever because today's economic woes find us putting expenses, investments and purchases under close scrutiny. Yet, without accurate, reliable information available through DHI milk testing, it's impossible to make informed, objective investment and purchasing decisions. DHI records provide a wealth of information to help find hidden obstacles that prevent your cows from optimizing their performance.

According to a dairy business analysis summary published by several land grant universities, the average expense for DHI records is less than 0.5% of all expenses on the average U.S. dairy. More importantly, DHI records account for business decisions that affect 42% of the total dairy expenses and 84% of the average dairy farm's income.

Milk production information – from daily weights to predicted lactation figures – is still the cornerstone of DHI records. Find the cows that aren't pulling their weight in the milking string. Monitor milk production peaks and persistency in lactation curves. Discover this information through graphs that show individual cows' and the herd's trends over time. Plus, find out how management changes have influenced cow and herd productivity.

Components – primarily fat and protein – impact milkchecks and your dairy's bottom line. Increasing fat and protein production through

effective feeding programs and genetics can substantially boost profits. You don't know a cow's milk components without DHI milk testing.

Milk components also help reveal metabolic problems in individual cows and/or within dairy herds. DHI records help you find fat:protein inversions and fat:protein ratios of more than 1.4 in early lactation cows. Transition cows with these levels are at risk for ketosis, displaced abomasums and fatty liver disease. Discover these trends quickly and early to prevent these diseases, rather than trying to treat them.

Reproduction challenges many dairy herds. Again, without DHI data, investigating reproductive performance is like trying to investigate a crime without any clues. DHI records can help you track and evaluate reproductive trends and programs. Additionally, DHI reports help you generate quick lists for breeding, drying off and calving.

Monitor bulk tank milk and individual cows' milk quality through SCC testing. Milk quality premiums hold some of the greatest potential for boosting milk sales revenue. Just a couple cows contributing high SCC levels can keep you from earning quality premiums. Knowing how much individual cows contribute to bulk tank SCC (BTSCC) is a highly effective tool for managing BTSCC.

When it's time for cows to make a career change, use reliable DHI data to make educated culling decisions. Resourceful DHI cow reports will help you select the cows that are contributing the least to your business's bottom line. Look at why cows are being culled so you can choose areas for improvement or observation.

Today's DHIA is not your father's DHIA. A vibrant system, DHIA provides information to make profit-enhancing decisions. The professional, experienced, responsive, resourceful, knowledgeable and reliable staff will help you use your DHI records effectively and efficiently, and offer service to support your dairy herd management software.