

Management by Manager -- Aided by Computer

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Management is the primary responsibility of the dairy farm owner/operator. While he/she may contribute in excess of 3000 hours of labor to the business, management should outrank labor as a priority. Personal computers have been around for over 25 years now and can be a useful management tool. In fact, the Dairy Records Management Systems (DRMS) (formerly the Dairy Records Processing Center of Raleigh, NC) this year celebrated 25 years of dairy records management which used on-farm computers. The current version of PC-based software used by DRMS called PCDART is a very advanced system to assist the dairy herd manager. PCDART is offered through DHIA but stand-alone versions are available for users whose herds are not enrolled in DHIA.

Features of PCDART include:

1. Fast data entry for cows, heifers, young bulls, sires and service sires.
2. Over 25 built-in management reports and the capability to create and print custom designed reports. There are over 600 database items to select from for each cow.
3. Look up capability for "cow page" and "heifer page" information. Included are test day data, reproduction, genetics, lactation history and much more as well as plots for individual animals.
4. The capability to record and track extensive health data for cows and heifers and growth data for heifers.
5. Flexible regrouping procedures.
6. Comprehensive inventories, projections and summaries.
7. Graphic display of performance of individual cows or groups of cows or of herd trends.

Many dairy producers are now using estrus synchronization in their herds. Whatever the protocol, there are a series of injections and a timed AI breeding. As a specific example of the personal computer making management easier, PCDART has the built in programs to enroll cows in Timed AI programs and print "To Do" lists and reports. The protocol can be either standard ones or those custom designed by the herdowner or their veterinarian or AI consultant. The "To Do" lists specify animals, dates and the schedule of procedures in the protocol. The reports specify what is to be done and to whom - both critical pieces of information if the manager is to have an effective estrus synchronization program.

It takes timely and accurate information to make decisions and successfully manage a dairy farm. PCDART is a valuable tool for today's dairy manager.