

NCSU Dairy Extension News Summer, 2006

NCPDA to Develop Strategic Plan for the State's Dairy Industry

by Norman Jordan, Jr., NCDPA President

At the February 2005 annual meeting of the North Carolina Dairy Producers Association, Dr. Sandy Maddox, Director of the NCDA&CS Research Stations Division, updated the membership on planned changes to the dairy unit at the Piedmont Research Station near Salisbury. NCDPA asked for the opportunity to be involved in the planning and development of the dairy research unit at the station, and our request was gladly approved. A research committee was appointed and began discussions on the possible expansion of the dairy herd and potential construction of a new dairy facility at the Piedmont Station.

As the committee commenced their discussions, they soon began to question the need to build new facilities or expand the herd at the Piedmont Station if the current down sizing of the state's dairy industry could not be stopped, slowed down, or reversed, and if adequate support for dairy research and extension at NC State University were not maintained. Because of these issues, the NCDPA directors recognized the need to develop a strategic plan for the North Carolina dairy industry. The directors approved commencing activities to develop a strategic plan in order to maintain and improve NC's dairy industry.

In preparation for an informal meeting in April 2006 with NCDA&CS Commissioner Steve Troxler and NCSU Dean Johnny Wynne regarding our concerns about the NC dairy industry, several issues were identified: 1) immigration reform policy to help maintain a needed work force on dairy farms, 2) farmland preservation and urban encroachment issues, 3) ability to attract new dairies or transfer ownership of existing dairies, 4) regulatory issues such as environmental or animal rights concerns being driven by emotion versus science, 5) milk marketing and the ability to find ways to enhance NC producers economic opportunities, 6) need for a viable and effective dairy extension program in North Carolina with knowledgeable personnel and access to specialists in key areas, 7) need for a strong dairy research program at NCSU that can have an immediate impact on NC producers, and 8) need to have a strong dairy teaching program at NCSU

or through cooperative arrangements with other universities. That April meeting was the first step in NCDPA's effort to develop a strategic plan.

The NC Dairy Foundation has approved funding a study by Dr. Geoff Benson to identify factors affecting NC dairy farmers' decisions to leave, enter, or remain in business. The results of this study, available sometime next year, will hopefully provide important information for developing strategies for dairy farm retention, expansion, relocation and recruitment that can be included in our strategic plan.

During the coming months we will be working on various activities directed towards developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the state's dairy industry. We will possibly be conducting a seminar with representatives of auxiliary industries such as feed, supply, veterinarians, and financial lenders on how to control and direct the future of our industry. If dairy producers are not profitable and sustainable, neither will be the support industries. Other fact finding and planning activities will also be conducted to help us develop the strategic plan.

As the NCDPA directors work to develop a North Carolina Dairy Industry Strategic Plan, we will be looking for future commitments and support from NCSU, NCDA&CS and others to assist us in achieving our goals. We appreciate what NCSU, NCDA&CS and others have done over the years in assisting our changing industry. With everyone's support and collaboration, the NCDPA can be confident of success in strengthening and improving our industry's future.

Re-evaluating Dry Cow Energy Feeding

by Dr. Lon Whitlow and Dr. Brinton Hopkins
NCSU Extension Dairy Specialists

Summary

Diets that restrict energy intake have proven to be the best for dry cows. Energy consumption should be restricted throughout the dry period. Limit feed the corn silage. Don't raise the grain levels in close-up dry cow rations. Keep the energy density of the diet around 56 to 60% TDN or NEL about 0.56 to 0.58 Mcal/lb. Fiber levels should be in the range of 30 to 40% ADF and about 55 to 70% NDF.

Background

In the early 1990's, it was realized that dry cows drop off in feed consumption during the last week or two prior to freshening. This drop in intake resulted in an energy deficiency. Therefore, cows mobilized body fat stores for energy. But, some of this mobilized fat accumulated in the liver and contributed to "fatty liver" problems in the fresh cow, especially increased ketosis.

Recommendations evolved for a two group system of feeding dry cows to allow "steaming up" or feeding additional grain to dry cows during the last few weeks of the dry period (the close-up dries). It was thought that this additional grain would compensate for the decline in

feed intake and maintain energy intake. Perhaps this would prevent body weight loss and the development of fatty livers. This system failed to produce desired results.

Research Findings

Since the early 1990's a number of research studies have looked more closely at this theory of "steaming up" close-up dry cow to determine any effects on fresh cow health and production. In summary of several studies, additional grain feeding during the close-up dry period did not prevent a drop in feed intake and did not prevent fat mobilization, which appears to be a natural process in the prepartum cow. "Steaming up" the close up cows, in contrast to limited energy consumption, has actually resulted in a larger drop in feed consumption and thus has not improved fresh cow performance or health.

New Recommendations

The best way to avoid ketosis and support production has proven to be restricting energy intake during the dry period followed by feeding early lactation cows for performance. The restricted energy diets resulted in minimizing the drop in energy intake, thus less fatty liver symptoms and less ketosis.

With this new recommendation, a two diet dry cow system may continue to be the best recommendation. With a two ration system, special factors can be included in the close-up dry ration that can benefit health and performance. These special considerations might include use of additives, different vitamin and mineral levels, or the use of DCAD diets for milk fever prevention. Some producers may graze dry cows and then bring them into a TMR system for the last few weeks of the dry period for better control of supplementation. But, one ration will work for dry cows and one ration may fit your system best.

The dry period should not be used to add weight or to put cows on weight loss diets. Instead, cows should come into the dry period in proper body condition, and then that condition maintained until freshening.

Are You a Competitive Dairy Employer?

By Dr. Geoff Benson
NCSU Extension Economist

Employees are an increasingly important part of a dairy farm operation and can be a major factor in achieving financial success. Labor costs are significant and the quality of the employees can affect performance in all aspects of the farm and herd. If you hire people to milk your cows and are interested in how your milker's compensation package compares with those hired by dairy farmers in other parts of the country, please consider contributing to the national survey described below.

This is the third dairy labor survey conducted by Greg Billikopf, an extension specialist with the University of California-Davis. Based on the previous two surveys, in 2000 and 2003, the results will provide useful information about milker costs and benefits around the country – but only if enough dairy farmers participate. The survey is short and you are asked to report on one hired employee who milked cows on your farm in April.

A copy of the survey is shown on pages 5-6. Please complete it and mail it by the end of June to the address indicated on the form. If you prefer, the survey is also available and can be completed on-line at: <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=1226> or at: <http://tinyurl.com/k9acf>

An edited excerpt of the report from the 2003 survey follows and illustrates the types of information that the new survey will produce.

	West	Midwest	Southeast	Northeast
Ave. hourly pay	\$10	\$8.6	\$9.3	\$8.7
Ave. years worked	5.8	3.5	3.9	3.6
Foreign born milkers	81%	49%	34%	22%
Ave. cows milked	1001	437	536	444
Ave. hours per shift	7.6	6.4	5.6	4.8

One can see, for instance, that the Midwest and Northeast show the lowest wages, but these represent workers who have spent a shorter length of time on the job. A correlation coefficient for the whole data showed a statistically significant relationship between time worked and wages earned. However, the magnitude of this correlation was quite weak for the complete data set. While in the West there seemed to be increased wages for those who worked over 7 years, this did not hold as true for the other regions of the nation. Some numbers here could be of value for those dairy farmers who wish to get a better idea of how they compare with their neighbors. The data across all regions showed that milkers employed for less than three years were earning an average of \$7.74 per hour. Data in the table show the average earnings for 3.5 to 6 years, from \$8.6 to \$10, respectively. In the West, dairy farmers were more likely to increase the average pay for those having worked 7 or more years, which was \$11 per hour. Some milkers were provided either housing or some housing allowance in the West (33%), Midwest (35%), Southeast (70%), and Northeast (37%).

The complete 2003 survey results can be viewed on-line at:
<http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7research/7res05.htm>



IN COOPERATION WITH



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
 U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of California and Stanislaus County cooperating

Dairy Wage Survey USA 2006

Choose **one milker** at your dairy operation and answer **questions 1- 7 thinking of this milker**. Also, as far as it is possible, answer questions with data for **April 2006**. Report GROSS wages before any deductions. **PLEASE** fold & stamp, or put in an *envelope* and stamp and return to the mailing address at the bottom of the second page by June 27, 2006.

--- Gregory Encina Billikopf, Farm Advisor

Years employee has worked at our dairy as a milker (round to nearest whole year).

_____ years

* What did the milker **earn** on an **hourly basis**? (Please convert to a per hour basis—do **not** include bonus or incentive pay, overtime pay, insurance, vacation pay, or housing)

_____ / hour

* Milker **earnings** for the month of **April** (please **do not** include bonus or incentive pay, overtime pay, insurance, vacation pay, or housing).

_____ / month of April

* Do you have a **bonus or incentive** program?

[] Yes [] No

If you have a **bonus or incentive** program (anything from providing workers uniforms or meat to a systematic program to reduce SCC or other), how much did milker earn in April (feel free to pro-rate if needed) on this program? (Do not include vacation pay.)

_____ / month of April

Number of **overtime hours** worked in April, if any (round to nearest whole number).

_____ hours worked in April

* Do you provide health, dental, eye or other type of **insurance**?

[] Yes [] No

Cost of your **insurance** program to you, **per month**.

_____ / month

How many **days of paid vacation** (actual time off) is this milker **entitled** to this **year**?

_____ vacation days entitled to this year

I provide this milker a pay bonus **in lieu of vacation time**, equivalent to about _____ paid hours **per month**.

_____ hours / month

* Was the milker provided with **housing** (or some housing allowance)?

[] Yes [] No

* **Total hours** (excluding overtime hours) milker worked in April.

_____ hours

* On what basis was the milker paid?

[] per cow [] per hour
 [] per month / week / etc.
 [] per milking

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General questions about your dairy.

How many **milking shifts** does your dairy complete per day? 2x 3x 4x or more

Total number of employees who **milked** two days or more in April (including relief and family members). _____ milkers

Number of milkers born **outside** the USA? _____ milkers born outside USA

Number of **female** milkers? _____ female milkers

On average, how many cows were milked per shift (i.e., per milking)? _____ average cows milked per shift

Average time to complete milking per shift, including clean up? (round to closest hour). _____ average time to complete shift

Number of milkers/pushers employed per shift? (OK to include family) _____ milkers / pushers per shift

Do you pay more for night or difficult shifts? Yes No

How would you describe your milking system? Flat Parlor Pit Parlor
 Stall Barn Rotary

Number of milking stalls? _____ milking stalls

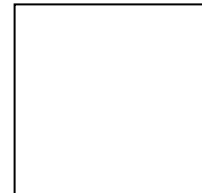
State in the USA Two letter abbreviation, please: _____

Labor Supply Questions

In contrast to three years ago, how difficult is it to find **milkers** or other entry level employees to work at **your** dairy? Much easier
 Somewhat easier
 About the same
 Somewhat more difficult
 Much more difficult
 Don't know, we have not needed to hire anyone

Cause for labor supply change Not really much of a change for us
 Change based on changes we made at the dairy
 Change based on external factors (not related to changes we have made)

Dairy Wage Survey
c/o Gregory Encina Billikopf
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Family Figures: Numbers You Should Know

by Laura Simpson, MPH, RD, LDN
Program Account Manager, Southeast United Dairy Industry Association (SUDIA)

There are so many numbers to remember these days, from our social security number to our phone number, to our bank account PIN number. As busy Americans, we seem to remember many of these numbers but often fall short when it comes to remembering critical numbers that pertain to our health.

It is time to make room in our memory for the important numbers that can improve our health. After all, a recent survey found that **85 percent** of Americans take an interest in their health and wellness in order to stay healthy and prevent future illness, yet the National Center for Health Statistics reported that **30 percent** of adults 20 years of age and older—more than **60 million** Americans—are obese. If we're serious about our health, then we need to treat it the same way we treat anything else we keep track of that's important to us.

Remembering these numbers doesn't need to be complicated. From 1 to 10,000, here are some easy numbers you should know to keep you and your family well:

One is the number of times you should see your physician for a physical each year. Just one visit can be all you need to make sure you're healthy and are able to take any preventative measures necessary to protect your health.

Five is the number of times you should strive to eat together with your family each week. Research shows that teens who eat family meals at least five times a week have better grades, are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and have better overall nutrition. Unfortunately, only 1/3 of American families are eating together on a regular basis.

120 over 80 is the number that the American Heart Association says Americans should strive for to maintain a healthy blood pressure. Simple lifestyle habits such as healthy eating and exercise can lower this number. A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* suggests that by adding three servings a day of low fat dairy foods as part of the DASH or Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension eating plan, adults may lower blood pressure more significantly than a low fat diet alone— an important finding for the estimated **33 percent** of Americans who suffer from high blood pressure.

206 is the number of bones that are in the adult body. By 2020, it is estimated that ½ of Americans over the age of 50 will be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis unless lifestyle changes are made. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently released a new calcium policy which specifically recommends dairy foods for children and adolescent to build strong bones. Children and adults can build bones to last a lifetime with plenty of physical activity and a balanced diet that includes 3 servings of milk, yogurt and cheese each day.

10,000 is number of steps that America on the Move suggests each of us take each day for better health. 10,000 may sound daunting, but the average American already takes about 8,000 steps daily, so simply start by adding just a few extra steps each day. Try parking away from the front door, choose the stairs instead of the elevator or enjoy a quick walk while on lunch break.

For more information, call 1-800-651-MILK (6455) to request a free tip sheet on Family Figures: Numbers You Should Know. Or visit our website at www.southeastdairy.org.

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NCSU Dairy Extension Web Page Address

http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/dairy/Dairyh~1.htm



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