

# Tools to monitor your herd's performance

Third in a Series



## DairyMetrics: A powerful benchmarking tool

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**Your DHI records** have a lot of valuable data about your herd. You can make that information even more valuable by using the DairyMetrics benchmarking system. Not everyone is a believer in benchmarking, but I am. It provides a lot of value in broad areas. It shows you your herd's strengths and areas of opportunities.



The new and improved DairyMetrics is tremendously useful and pretty easy to use. With a little thought, you can set-up DairyMetrics to allow you to compare your herd with similar herds in your region that are comprised of the same breed and herd size. In fact there are 76

variables from which you can select herds you feel will provide the right comparison. Careful thought in setting up your parameters is important so herds that do not maintain accurate records or are from other areas of the country can be eliminated, hence giving you better information for comparison. Once your criteria are

established, DairyMetrics allows you to save it for future use, making it easy to use on a quarterly basis.

To show you just how easy benchmarking can be I'm going to share how I recently used DairyMetrics to evaluate a herd in the southern part of this region. I wanted to compare this herd's perfor-

mance with similar herds in the region, so I logged onto DairyMetrics at [www.drms.org](http://www.drms.org) and selected the DairyMetrics option.

### Selecting parameters for comparison

I first selected herds in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin to limit the region. Since this was a Holstein herd, I selected for this breed. Under *Categories/Options*, I selected herd sizes between 250 and 1,000 cows under the "General" tab and then clicked "Add To Options". I also selected herds with a rolling herd average between 18,000 and 40,000 pounds of milk under the "Production" tab and clicked "Add to Options". Now I have two parameters. Finally, I selected services per pregnancy under the "Reproduction" tab to be between 1.5 and 10 for "all lactations", "1<sup>st</sup> Lactation", "2<sup>nd</sup> Lactation", and "3<sup>rd</sup>+ Lactation". I selected this for each lactation group to ensure I did not have herds that exclusively bull breed or do not accurately record all breedings. My selection of comparison herds was now complete with a total of six parameters all of which only took a couple of minutes to set up.

The next step was to select the "Run Report" tab at the top of the page. When you enter the "Run Report" screen, you must enter the herd code and RAC for the herd being evaluated. If you don't want to compare a specific herd, simply leave this information blank. After entering the herd information, I clicked on "Display to Screen" to run the report. A selection box

**Figure 1: Production summary of selected herds**

DM Data Value	My Herd	Perc.	Number of Herds	Average	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Rolling Milk	28,640	87%	226	25,515.0	2,777.0	18,826.0	31,429.0
Rolling Milk-Year Change	990.5	77%	226	720.4	3,685.6	-6,392.0	26,124.0
Rolling Fat	918	49%	223	919.5	109.8	674.0	1,193.0
Rolling Protein	845	81%	223	765.5	79.8	559.0	945.0
Daily Milk 1-40 D- 1st Lact	54	10%	224	64.3	8.8	45.0	98.0
Daily Milk 1-40 D- 2nd Lact	118	99%	225	88.3	12.6	47.0	120.0
Daily Milk 1-40 D- 3rd+ Lact	101	82%	226	89.7	12.5	59.0	132.0
Daily Milk-Milk Cows	82.3	72%	226	76.6	8.9	48.1	99.6
Daily Milk -All Cows	71.8	68%	226	67.3	8.3	43.6	86.3
Daily Fat, %	3.4	5%	223	3.7	0.3	3.1	5.1
Daily Protein, %	3.2	75%	223	3.1	0.1	2.7	3.5
Summit Mik 1st Lact	71	9%	226	79.2	6.4	61.0	95.0
Summit Milk 2nd Lact	120	97%	226	102.5	9.9	74.0	124.0
Summit Milk 3rd+ Lact	126	97%	226	105.8	10.3	79.0	133.0
Peak Milk 1st Lact	98	84%	226	88.6	8.6	65.0	113.0
Peak Milk 2nd Lact	143	99%	226	112.3	11.8	75.0	144.0
Peak Milk 3rd+ Lact	152	100%	226	117.0	12.4	82.0	152.0
Proj 305 Day ME Milk	30,759	94%	226	26,699.2	2,551.4	19,814.0	35,236.0

appears at the bottom with the following categories: General, Production, Udder Health, Reproduction, and Genetics. I expanded the General Area and found I had 226 herds in the comparison with an average of 481 cows. I then began my comparison for each of the production areas.

## Reviewing Performance

### Production

**Figure 1** illustrates some of the information available under Production. Similar information is available under each of the other categories. I have only extracted a part of the production information in Figure 1 due to space limitations.

From this information, you can see the herd I evaluated has a good rolling herd average (87<sup>th</sup> percentile among the herds) and good daily milk production. The second lactation and greater animals are milking well in early lactation and all animals have a strong peak milk production. This herd is ranked at greater than the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile for each of these parameters. However, early lactation performance of 1<sup>st</sup> lactation animals, as well as butterfat production in this herd should be discussed as an opportunity as the percentile rankings are very low.

### Udder Health

Udder health information for this herd is not available. The herd is not currently testing for somatic cell counts (SCC). This is unfortunate because it provides a tremendous amount of information relative to the mastitis control program so the herd can maximize milk quality and udder health in his herd. The cost for SCC testing is very reasonable for the information it provides.

### Reproduction

Reproductive performance in this herd is currently very good with a 21-day pregnancy rate of 23 percent. How do you think that ranked among my comparison herds? It was at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. Only 5 percent of herds had a higher 21 day pregnancy rate. I am a reproductive specialist and like to work with improving reproduction on herds but I would not recommend any changes due to the

excellent reproductive performance in this herd. Actually, I had a long conversation with the herd owner about the factors which have resulted in such good performance. This herd has good people implementing an outstanding management program incorporating timed AI and utilizing Select Sires' semen.

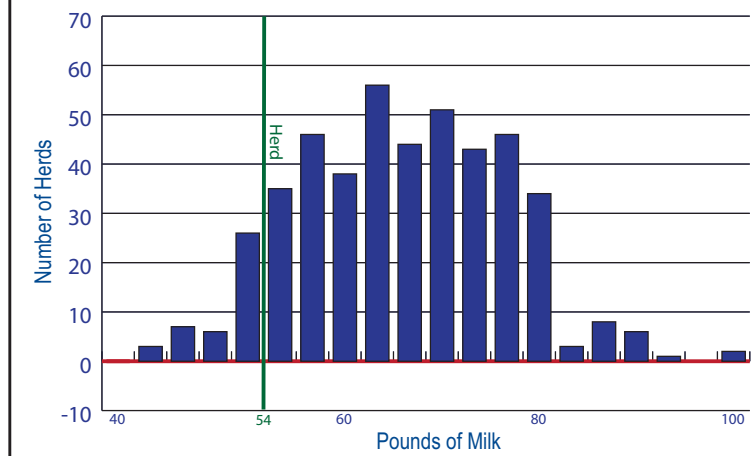
### A picture is worth a 1,000 words

Another outstanding aspect of the DairyMetrics system is its graphing capability. The graphs are selected by clicking on the "Graphs" tab at the top of the page. **Figure 2** illustrates the distribution of 1-40 day milk for 1<sup>st</sup> lactation animals in the comparison herds and how this particular herd's value compares. You can clearly see that this herd is below average.

### A powerful analytical tool

Based on this description you can clearly understand that using the Dairy-

**Figure 2: 1-40 day milk distribution for selected herds**



Metrics benchmarking system from Dairy Records Management Service (DRMS) is fairly easy. Another great advantage is that there is no charge to producers or consultants for using it.

In this article I have only described some of the features and illustrated its use in one example herd. DairyMetrics is a powerful analytical tool and I encourage you to take the time to visit the Web site and explore it. DairyMetrics can provide some interesting perspectives on your herd's performance when compared to the overall performance of herds in your region. ★

## DHI Lab Quality Certification now includes John's testing

The National DHIA board of directors recently accepted standard guidelines and procedures for ELISA testing in DHI laboratories. This action makes ELISA testing part of the Quality Certification Services audit that all DHI laboratories participate in annually. Along with AntelBio, eight DHI labs across the U.S. and Canada currently perform John's ELISA testing for their members.

AntelBio's research has proven much can be learned about the health and condition of dairy cows through further analysis of DHI milk samples. The recently implemented guidelines and procedures also allows for the use of other ELISA tests such as leukosis, BVD and progesterone.

"A formal quality assurance program will provide greater consistency in testing procedures," stated Todd Byrem, Ph.D., Director of AntelBio. "By incorporating guidelines and procedures for ELISA testing into their program, National DHIA will be able to quickly adopt and implement new testing services as they become available." All DHI laboratories running the AntelBio Milk ELISA test for John's will implement the standard guidelines and procedures beginning January 1, 2008.

