

# Tools to monitor your herd's performance

Second in a Series



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Last month we discussed benchmarks and ways to evaluate reproductive performance of your dairy by using Select RePRO Analysis™. This month we will discuss monitoring production performance through the use of PC DART and DairyMetrics, a benchmarking tool for dairy farm performance evaluation.

## Evaluating Production Performance

Evaluating production on a dairy represents some unique challenges. It is difficult to set absolute benchmarks since production goals are breed and producer specific. Obviously, since this represents the farms income, the higher the production the better. However, the cost to obtain that production must always be evaluated. Ask yourself this question, "What are my inputs and what can I reasonably expect from these inputs?" If you are falling short of expectations it may be time to evaluate things like cow comfort, heat abatement and feed delivery.

Table 1 represents some key production performance parameters which were generated through DairyMetrics. In DairyMetrics you select the key performance parameters to be evaluated based on the criteria you choose to compare your herd to (cohort herds).

For this particular table, the benchmarks are based on these parameters:

- Holstein herds in the Midwest,
- 300-599 cows,
- 150-199 days in milk,
- RHA of >28,000 pound of milk.

Eighteen herds met these criteria and allow us to benchmark against herds performing under the same feed and

weather conditions. This is a fairly elite group of herds and if these are your expectations then the highest herd becomes your goal and the lowest herd becomes the point for intervention.

There are many key performance parameters in which you can measure the progress of your herd. Following I will

discuss a sample of these parameters and why they are valuable to monitor.

## Projected 305day ME Milk

Projected 305 day ME milk is extended to 305 days in milk and is reflected in Figure 1. It adjusts for location, age and season of calving to a mature cow basis. If the cows are milked more than twice a day it also adjusts to 2X per day milking. It is interesting to look at these figures by lactation to pick up on a cow comfort problem or a concern with heifer rearing.

## Standardized 150 Day Milk

Although a farm is paid for the actual pounds of milk it sells, it is the standardized 150 day milk that removes the variation in test day production due to breed, age, season of calving and stage of lactation. It allows production on one test day to be compared fairly to another test day. This figure projects production as if all cows were 150 days in milk and better evaluates feed and management changes than actual pounds of milk.

Figure 2 displays a herd's current test using standardized 150-day milk. The

Table 1: Key Production Performance Parameters

Item	Lowest Herd	Highest Herd
Summit Milk 1 <sup>st</sup> Lactation	80	93
Summit Milk 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lactation	97	127
Summit Milk 3 <sup>rd</sup> + Lactation	103	132
Peak Milk 1 <sup>st</sup> Lactation	87	108
Peak Milk 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lactation	101	147
Peak Milk 3 <sup>rd</sup> + Lactation	109	153
Projected 305 day ME milk	25,204	31,527
Standardized 150 day milk	85	110

Figure 1

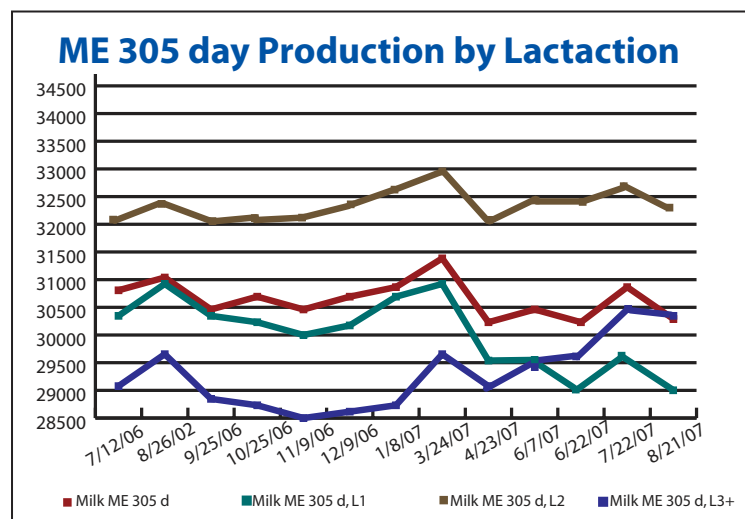
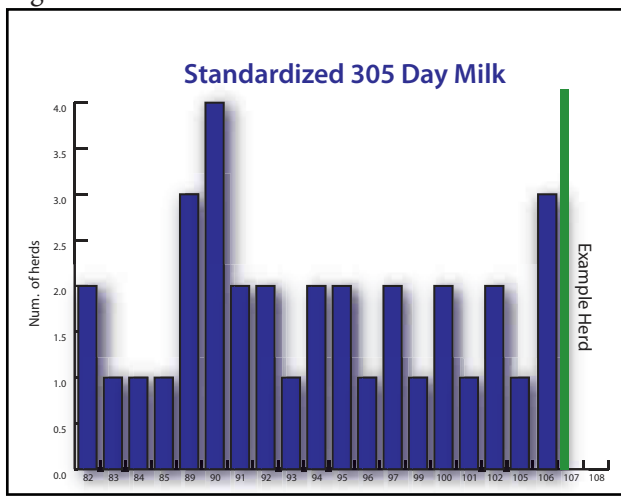


Figure 2



green line represents how this herd is performing in comparison to the cohorts.

### Summary

There are many more parameters we should monitor to evaluate production performance including persistency and somatic cell. Further utilizing your DHI records in conjunction with PC DART and DairyMetrics for the evaluation of production performance is essential for long-term success.

NorthStar is equipped to provide assistance in monitoring key production and reproduction parameters on your farm.

For more information on NorthStar's Dairy Production Analysis (DPA) contact me at 1.800.471.3767. ☆

## Dairy Metrics

DairyMetrics is a web-based system available through Dairy Records Management Service (DRMS) and is the most extensive benchmarking system available as it contains herd performance data from approximately half of all the dairy herds in the United States.

With DairyMetrics you can benchmark your herd against others of similar size and in your geographic area. Besides displaying information about your herd, DairyMetrics displays the means, standard deviations, minimums and maximums for the cohort herds. It also gives the percentiles for each herd performance parameter in comparison to the cohort group.

For more information on DairyMetrics visit [www.drms.org](http://www.drms.org) or call NorthStar.

## Pre-payment savings

NorthStar Cooperative is once again offering a year-end pre-payment opportunity. For every dollar you pre-pay on your NorthStar A.I. Services, DHI Services or AntelBio account prior to December 31, 2007, NorthStar Cooperative will credit your account \$1.03.

By participating in this plan, you will receive an additional 3 percent in buying power with the Cooperative, and there may also be tax advantages. Please consult your tax advisor to determine if there are any additional savings you can earn.

For more information or to make a pre-payment call 1.800.631.3510.

## Stockowner meetings planned

All stockowners are encouraged to attend one of the upcoming business meetings to cast their vote for the election of directors and resolutions and advisory committee members.

To be eligible to vote at the 2008 stockowner meetings, you must be signed-up as a common stockowner by December 31, 2007. Watch your mail for complete meeting details in the January/February edition of The Point.

Dist.	Date	Location
3	January 29	Russ' Restaurant, Muskegon, Mich.
4	February 20	Golden Nugget, Irish Hills, Mich.
9	February 12	Fresh Country Aire, Stratford, Wis.
10	February 13	Sleep Inn & Suites, Eau Claire, Wis.
12	February 5	Essenhaus Inn & Convention Center, Middlebury, Ind.

