

Worry free reproduction

Nicole Mackinder

Brian Lepianka of B & D Dairy

doesn't worry about reproduction. Thanks to NorthStar Cooperative large herd reproduction technician Marlin Strehlow, he doesn't have to. With a pregnancy rate of 21 percent in his 1,650 cow herd, Brian is understandably confident that Strehlow provides the knowledge and consistency to keep the reproduction program going well.

The Pound, Wisconsin herd owned by Brian and his wife Danette, started on a modified Presynch and Ovsynch program about four years ago when Brian enlisted Strehlow's services. While farm staff administers the injections, Strehlow takes care of the tail chalking, maintains the farm's reproduction records and does all the breeding.

"Our synch program works because we have a great technician," states Brian. "Marlie never misses a day and he is a true cow person who cares enough to make sure every cow is accounted for."

One of the greatest benefits Brian has by utilizing a NorthStar large herd technician is that Strehlow takes care of the reproduction program and that means Brian doesn't have to. "It is a relief that Marlie does his job so well and doesn't require help from us," admits Brian. "Not only does he do an outstanding job, but having Marlie here saves me the cost of employing additional herd managers which saves a lot of money."

While saving money is always beneficial, it is the end result of the program that pleases Brian the most. Since instituting the Presynch and



Ovsynch program, the herd's pregnancy rate has increased from 17 to 21 percent. "Your pregnancy rate can make you or break you," states Brian.

"Marlie is dependable and that has paid

off with proven improvement in our reproductive performance."

Not only does the herd currently boast a pregnancy rate which is well above the national average of 14 percent, but it has improved and then maintained during the herd's expansion

from 900 to 1,650 cows. Brian credits the progress not only to Strehlow's skills and a strict com-

pliance to the synchronization injection schedule; but also to a good fresh cow program and cow comfort.

"Marlie provides an excellent heat detection and breeding program here, which are key reasons we have been able to increase our pregnancy rate while expanding the herd," Brian declares. "The most important factor though is that we keep things consistent and so even though the herd size is always growing, the program by which we are successful doesn't change."

NorthStar Cooperative Dairy Programs Evaluator Dale Sabo assists with all mating choices at the farm.



Brian Lepianka, herd owner; Jay Krull, large herd technician supervisor and Marlie Strehlow, technician

"It doesn't matter what the milk price is or what else is going on, we stick with what works," declares Brian. "As a result our rolling herd average has increased by 4,300 pounds of milk in the last four years and we currently have the nicest group of two-year-olds since I have been farming."

Sire selection for the milking herd at B & D Dairy centers around using proven bulls including: Oman, Hi-Metro, Blitz and Best. All heifers are bred with gender SELECTed™ semen and the farm currently runs a 50 percent conception rate. "If you want a heifer for sure use gender SELECTed semen," states Brian. "Pregnancies from this semen are almost guaranteed to produce heifer calves for us."

While many factors contribute to B & D Dairy's success, the common denominator is reliability. From the reproduction work provided by Strehlow to the chosen matings, reliability is key and creates a worry free system for Brian. "With Marlie and the current reproduction here at the farm I have no grief," remarks Brian. "I wish all the aspects of the farm could run the way the reproduction program does – that would be perfect." ☆