



Quality Certification Services Inc.

Every step of the way QC

Behind the scenes, Quality Certification Services (QCS) develops and implements guidelines, training and education so the dairy industry knows DHI records are accurate and credible. Besides dairy producers, many product and service providers, such as breed associations, AI organizations, Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory (AIPL) (to generate genetic evaluations and conduct genetic and management research), Interbull, nutritionists, veterinarians, environmental specialists, bankers, milk plants and consultants, rely on these records, which provide valuable information. Whether the information goes straight back to the dairy farm for management purposes or to AIPL, there's no difference in the credible and accurate information communicated through DHI records.

From the time milk samples, milk weights and event data are collected on the farm to the time the resulting information is released to the dairy producer and other industry service providers – usually just two to three days – QCS focuses on assuring the data's accuracy, credibility and integrity. Because a lot of entities "touch" each DHI milk sample (and other documented information, such as breeding date, cow identification number, calving date and milk yield and components), QC staff monitors, evaluates and certifies each of these entities – field service providers, meter centers and technicians, electronic meters, labs and dairy records processing centers (DRPCs). In addition, QC staff trains, monitors, evaluates and certifies field service providers, meter technicians and lab personnel.

With approximately 4.4 million cows on DHI test in 23,000 herds, the QC program has a vast and broad scope. The touch points include:

- 27 field service affiliates, with more than 3,000 field technicians (including 284 dependent service providers)
- 47 meter centers with 94 meter technicians and 103,165 certified portable meters
- 68,127 certified on-farm electronic meters (calibrated at least annually)
- 47 labs analyzing an average of 4.73 million milk samples monthly
- 4 DRPCs

While Figure 1 simplifies the dairy records industry "web," it captures the interconnectivity of the system's many allied partners. All data generated from the various players are processed at one of four DRPCs prior to submission to the Genetic Evaluation Program (GEP). Whether data go to GEP or back to the farm, dairy industry players can be confident that QC is working diligently to make sure the information is accurate.

In addition, Figure 1 illustrates the areas that QCS reviews for compliance. The multi-level QC programs provide numerous checkpoints to assure data accuracy prior to reaching a DRPC, and make a final check for accuracy of processed data leaving that center.

QC-certified equipment, personnel

Within the DHI system, QC-certified field service organizations collect data and milk samples on dairy farms. These technicians work for a QC-certified milk recording organization. Each field technician must complete training with respect to field services programs, including, but not

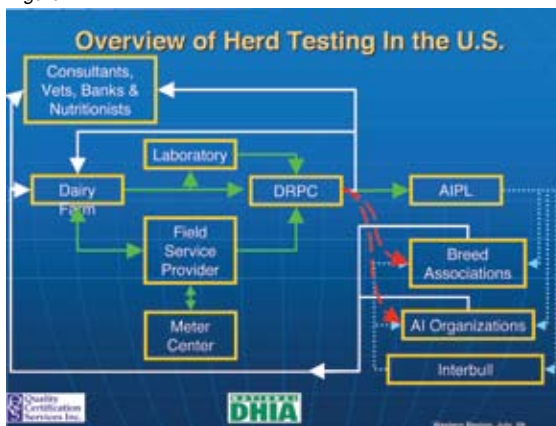
limited to, data handling and proper milk sampling and collection procedures.

In addition, QCS works with dairy producers who have on-farm meters – making sure their investment in on-farm meters and related software record

information accurately and generate credible information. With a dynamic system in place, QC programs adapt to each individual and unique dairy farm. These programs do not compete with on-farm milk recording systems; instead, they complement on-farm milk recording systems.

As required by the QC program in the United States, the International Committee for Animal Recording and National DHIA must approve all recording devices used in herd recording programs. Biennially, QC staff inspect and audit each meter center on-site, and audit all meter technicians performing calibration and repair services. At a

Figure 1



For more information about the QC Program and QCS, contact Steven Sievert, manager, QC Program, at 608-848-6455, ext. 113, e-mail: sjsievert@dhia.org, or Jay Mattison, administrator of QCS, ext. 111, e-mail: jmattison@dhia.org. Or, log on to www.quality-certification.com.

certifies milk samples, data

minimum, all recording devices (monthly) are calibrated every 12 months.

Inspect, audit labs

QCS also audits and inspects DHI labs on-site, biennially, to evaluate procedures, instruments and documentation. The comprehensive review assesses processes and systems – assuring accurate sample analysis and data integrity.

Furthermore, DHI labs take part in the QCS samples unknown program to monitor and assess performance and accuracy. To evaluate compliance, QCS provides test samples to labs, monthly. As

part of the QC guidelines, specific lab accuracy tolerances and deviations have been established. Every month, each DHI lab must demonstrate that all instruments are operating within compliance.

Compared to milk processors' labs, DHI labs analyze milk samples with more extreme values for SCC, fat percent and protein percent. (Individual cows' milk, compared to bulk tank milk, yields a wider range of test results.) No matter the breed of cattle or milk quality level, certified DHI labs accurately measure both ends of the scale for SCC and protein and fat percent.

All QC-certified labs provide milk component and SCC analysis. Some labs offer tests for milk urea nitrogen (MUN), enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) (for detecting Johne's disease, BVD and/or leukosis) and microbiology. QCS also evaluates some of these tests for accuracy and compliance.

The average turn-around time from milk sample collection on a dairy to lab analysis is

1.45 days for U.S. DHI labs. DHI laboratory managers provide input, regarding certification guidelines, through the Laboratory Advisory Committee. The committee meets annually to offer suggestions, clarifications and/or revisions to current and proposed guidelines. This fosters a dynamic system that ensures auditing guidelines for DHI labs are current, relevant and serve the milk recording industry's best interests.

DHI participation is growing

With such a dynamic system, participation in milk recording programs has experienced

steady growth the past six years. About one-half of the U.S. dairy cow population is on a DHI milk testing program.

While U.S. dairy herds come in many different sizes and shapes,

so do the dairy herds that participate in milk recording programs. Figure 2 illustrates that herds of all sizes participate in an approved test plan with a certified provider. The result: cows from herds of all sizes, geographic locations and management programs are included in the genetic evaluations generated from the U.S. dairy cow population.

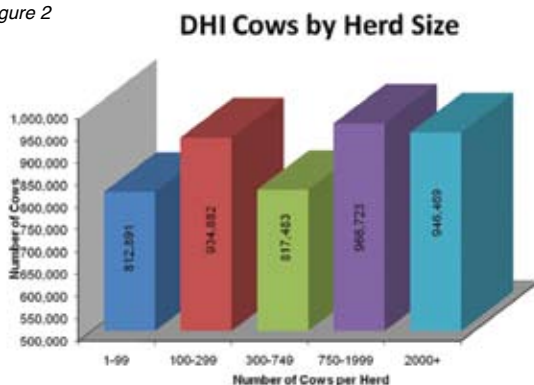
Producers gain the most

Many dairy industry players realize the importance and value of DHI records. However, dairy producers ultimately gain the most value from this information. The timely data provide individual dairy producers with many benchmarks and trends – from milk quality indicators to reproductive performance to milk component results – to help with individual cow, herd and business management decisions.

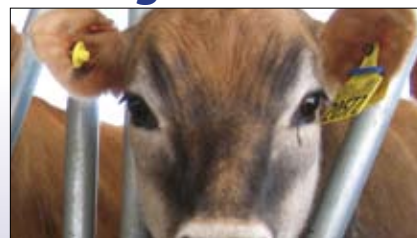
With the addition of genomics to U.S. bull proofs earlier this year, DHI records validate the genomic data and provide phenotypic data for dairy producers' on-farm management use and genetic evaluations. QCS assures accuracy of the phenotypic data before releasing it to AIPL, which generates the genomic and phenotypic genetic evaluation values and rankings. Despite bull proof information that comes from genomic data, DHI milk testing is necessary to validate genomics and provide phenotypic numbers.

QC's role in the dairy records system starts on dairy farms, but impacts decisions, products and services around the world. The QC program provides a basis for compliance by all entities within the milk recording industry and certifies providers regularly. Bottom line: QCS assures credibility and integrity throughout the extremely interconnected web of the dairy records system.

Figure 2



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