Mission Goals and Tactics
DHI equals Management

There are several sources for the Mission, Goals and Tactics tagline but let’s go with referencing the tagline from the Cornell Pro-Dairy program. These three key elements are part of management, which you can see come from the first letters of the words in the tagline and have the abbreviation MGT for management. Key elements in any management program are measurements, data and information to make decisions.

In today’s dairy farming operations these management decisions can be about feeding, breeding, culling, sire selection, manure management, SCC levels, crop production, milking systems and the list goes on. But the key term is management and management of these areas is driven by decisions that have some basis of measurement, metrics or benchmarks. All of the areas contribute to the production of milk, fat and protein that is produced to feed a hungry world. Cows, herds, people and farms all need to be managed on a regular basis.

At the 2009 American Dairy Science Association Discover Conference on Dairy Herd Analytics, Robert Lewis, a business consultant, presented the concept of evidence based decision making which has clear building blocks:

- Clear goals
- Clear definitions
- Clear data (evidence)
- Clear decisions
- Clear actions

Promotional Tape Measure from the 1980’s

Lewis also presented during the 2009 Discovery Conference that measuring is the foundation of decisions. He also presented the Three Fallacies of Measurement:

- Measuring the right things wrongly – will lead to wrong results
- Measuring the wrong things rightly or wrongly – will lead to the wrong results
- Measuring unimportant things – will lead to failure to get important results

Dairy farms want to have clear goals, definitions and data while measuring the right things correctly and accurately.

Foundation of DHI System

Dairy cow and herd measurements with correctness and accuracy are the foundation of the DHI system. DHI programs can be carried out based on farms’ data needs, use and desire to have benchmarks available to manage and make decisions for the herd and farm. DHI field staff and farm personnel are key points of data capture and obtaining milk samples. These data and samples flowing into the system, being processed, analyzed and data returned for on-farm use is the result of dairy farm commitment to a system that returns value to the farm for management of cows and the herd. This is a farm size neutral return as it can be applied to any size herd or group of dairy cows.

Current Opportunities in the DHI Sector

There are many systems that measure
on-farm values, but the samples going to DHI labs provide a wealth of information ranging from fat, protein, somatic cells to Johnes’ disease results. So basically unlocking the data contained in the milk sample can help manage the dairy herd for economic and health factors, which are all key factors in today’s dairy production system. Dairy farms want to manage with evidence to take advantage of the technology that is available in decision making. Many farms hear and see a lot about genetics with all the promotional information but even genetics is more about management of genetics than pure genetics in your dairy herd.

DHI field service, Labs and Dairy Records Processing Centers (DRPCs) all have services and tools that benefit dairy herds in the measurement process. These products can range from quick return of SCC reports indicating cows that need further evaluation to genetic or genomic reports to help with choosing replacement heifers for the herd. Find further DHI resources at www.dhia.org and www.quality-certification.com

From the 1980’s DHI packet tape measure the slogan was: “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

Perhaps in 2014 better wording would be: “If you don’t measure it and measure it accurately, you can’t do good management.”