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DHI releases a new App to calculate SCC level Impact

DHI (Dairy Herd Improvement Information) records are an essential part of dairy herd management for progressive dairy operations. The old adage "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it" holds true when on the dairy farm, particularly when it comes to somatic cell count (SCC) management says Jeffery Brewley, Donna Amaral-Phillips, and Michelle Arnold, University of Kentucky Animal and Veterinary Science staff.

They go on to say that when working with dairy farmers, they often hear the statement: "I don't know how I would be able to manage my somatic cell count without my DHI records." Recent milk market trends and premiums increase the need for managing SCC to gain a better return for a herd's milk sales. Farmers are now seeing the value of having monthly individual cow SCC values. Many new farmers to the DHI system have a lot of questions about interpreting the meaning of SCC information.

DHI farms that have participated for many years in DHI testing also may not understand the value DHI records provide for SCC management. There are different formats and delivery, but most DHI farmers receive a test day "Hot Sheet" The "hot sheet" is often described as the single most useful DHIA report provided to dairy producers.

The Kentucky educators go on to provide an explanation of the test day SCC results and Hot Sheet.

"Each cow in the herd contributes somatic cells to the herd's bulk tank. How many cells an individual cow contributes is a factor of the somatic cell concentration within her milk (measured in cells per mL) and the volume of milk she produces. From DHI testing, both SCC concentration and milk volume are collected. So, each cow's contribution of somatic cells to the bulk tank can be calculated using these two pieces of information. A "weighted average SCC" is calculated for the bulk tank using this information from all cows. Then, using cows with particularly high SCC or high milk production with moderately high SCC can have a huge impact on herd SCC, particularly in small herds. With larger herds, the impact that one cow has on SCC

is smaller because this milk is diluted by the milk from other cows. This information can prove very valuable for dealing with a short-term high SCC problem."

Herd and Hot Sheet information can be useful for pinpointing the source of an SCC problem. Looking at high SCCs values in early lactation, might lead to a review of dry and fresh cow management. If no effect of stage of lactation is indicated milking procedures and lactating cow housing may be examined as a cause of high SCCs.

DHI provides a wealth of information from each test period just from testing for SCC. The DHI SCC information can be extremely useful in efforts to lower SCC and diagnose SCC problems within a herd. It is important to consult with your veterinarian before changing any treatment or vaccination protocols to best target the pathogens responsible for an increased SCC.

Remember that DHI testing is not for finding and culling the highest SCC cows each month in order to stay under a target limit; rather it is a tool to help find the underlying causes of mastitis within a herd to help farmers correct these problems. Prevention of mastitis is always more economical than treatments.

New DHI SCC Financial Application

DHI has created a newly released SCC financial calculator application which can be found on the www.dhia.org website. This app tool will help dairy farmers see the potential financial impact of SCC results on a herd basis. Using DHI test day SCC data helps manage SCC on a broad basis. Facts tell and dollar results prove.

