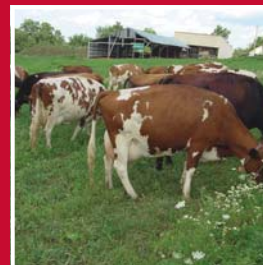


# FIELD & FEEDLOT



NORTHWEST AREA EXTENSION

JUNE 2008 ISSUE

## Be Smart When Buying Dairy Cows for Your Herd

By Chris Mondak, ISU Extension Dairy Specialist

It is not unusual to hear a dairyman say: “We were doing OK with our herd until we brought in new cows. Then we got hit with \_\_\_x\_\_\_ and we’ve been trying to dig out of trouble ever since.” That “x” is often filled in with BVD, Staph Aureus or mycoplasma mastitis, hairy heel warts, or Johnes Disease. If you are maintaining or expanding a dairy herd, you must make decisions on selecting and purchasing dairy cattle, and you too are vulnerable to buying in disease.

In the April 08 issue of *Udder Topics*, The National Mastitis Council posts a summary of suggestions Harvey Barkema, University of Calgary, presented to NMC Annual Meeting in 2008 on smart strategies to use to avoid buying disease. The following is a summary of the key points on strategies to avoid bringing in udder infection in to your herd. Go to [www.nmconline.org](http://www.nmconline.org) for full text.

### Point #1: Be selective on where you choose to purchase replacements. Set standards to gauge the biosecurity risks of buying replacements from a herd of origin. Look for these traits in the herd of origin:

- ◆ Herd SCC rolling average of less than 200,000 for at least one year
- ◆ Records available on individual cow SCC reported bi-monthly for the previous six months
- ◆ Herd should provide information on pathogens present on farm
- ◆ Herd should be BVD-free or vaccinated
- ◆ Herd must not have cows with severe teat lesions
- ◆ Owner must be honest and willing to give you all this information

### Point #2: Be sure that the cows you are considering purchasing meet these standards:

- ◆ Cow must never have exceeded 200,000 SCC in her life
- ◆ Cow should have at least 3 most recent SCC in current lactation under 100,000
- ◆ Cow should have been given dry cow treatment if being offered for sale in early lactation

### Point #3: Once you purchase the new cow(s), take these actions before putting the new purchase in your herd:

- ◆ Examine udder, teats and milk UPON ARRIVAL to your farm.
- ◆ If replacements are lactating, check CMT for 3 consecutive days
- ◆ Milk the new replacements last until all CMT tests are negative for these 3 consecutive days
- ◆ Send cows back to vendor if udder health abnormalities are found within 2 weeks of purchase (you’ll have to have this part in the purchase agreement).

Hopefully these points will give you the encouragement to be selective about what you purchase. Cows are expensive, and no one wants to throw money away on an infected animal, or worse yet, bring infection to your herd and thus cause even more financial stress. You are the gatekeeper to your herd’s health. **Be smart, set standards, and stick to your standards.** Again for full text on the original article summarized here, and for more good information on udder health, go to the National Mastitis Council website at [www.nmconline.org](http://www.nmconline.org).

## Crop Things To Do In June

By Paul Kassel, ISU Extension Field Agronomist

**Check corn populations.** Check corn populations for each hybrid or every field. Take a tape measure and count the plants in the following distance. This will give you plant population in thousand plants per acre. Take stand counts from the same planter unit each time (like the middle two units).

### Row spacing

36 inch  
30 inch  
20 inch

### Distance to measure

14 ft 6 in.  
17 ft 5 in.  
26 ft 1 in.

### Things to look for:

- ◆ Stand counts versus planting rate
- ◆ Plant spacing
- ◆ Doubles, skips
- ◆ Variation in plant development
- ◆ Insects that cause stand reduction (cutworms, grubs, wireworms)

This is a good activity to do in June because you likely can remember any planting problems. Things like seed size, seed weight and seed treatment may affect planter performance. Notes that you make this time of year can be helpful when you make seed selection for the next season.

This is also a good time of the year to evaluate the performance of insecticide seed treatments – if you find that you have had cutworm, grub or wireworm problems.

**Consider late spring Nitrogen tests.** The late spring nitrogen test (LSNT) can be useful to confirm nitrogen (N) levels or nitrogen needs. Fields that have had manure where the N content was in question, areas with excessive rainfall, or fields where N rates were questionable may be good candidates for the LSNT. See <http://www.agron.iastate.edu/soiltesting/LSN.pdf> for more information.

**Check soybean plant populations.** Recent research has shown that a final plant population of 100,000 seeds per acre is adequate for maximum soybean yields. Check soybean plant populations using the following information.

Row spacing, inches	One plant per foot of row equals:
36	15,000
30	18,000
20	26,000
15	35,000
10	52,000
7	75,000

Measure out three foot of row, count the plants and figure the stand count from there. Compare planted seeds per acre to the final plant population.

**This is also a good time of year to check:**

- ◆ for soybean cyst nematode (dig a few plants).
- ◆ for soybean disease – like damping off, rhizoctonia and fusarium root rots.
- ◆ For more information see <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/1998/5-11-1998/scoutsoy.html>
- ◆ Effectiveness of the iron deficiency chlorosis resistance of your soybean variety. See <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2001/7-2-2001/soychlor.html> for more information.

**Update your field records.** Update your field maps with hybrid/variety information, planting dates, tillage operations, seeding rates, and herbicide applications. Record the locations of different hybrids/varieties. Note the areas where the b.t. rootworm and corn borer refuge acres are located.

## Beef News

*Beth Ellen Doran, ISU Extension Beef Field Specialist  
Dennis DeWitt, ISU Extension Livestock Field Specialist*

**Change in Animal Counting** – A bill to change the way animal units are counted has been approved by the Iowa legislature. As quoted from a legislative summary: “The language requires that the animal unit capacity, which includes both an open feedlot and a confinement operation, shall be added together for NPDES permit purposes. This EPA mandated combination is required only if the animal in the open feedlot and the confinement operation are all of the same category or type of animal as used in federal EPA CAFO rules.” Simply put, all cattle are counted together and all hogs are counted together regardless of housing type.

This means that animal counting in Iowa is now supposed to be the same as the federal law. This will more than likely require a re-write of Chapter 65 in the Iowa Code of Law. The bill will still need to be signed by the Governor so the date of implementation is not yet known. The bill incorporates into code existing EPA and DNR rule requirements for open feedlot inspections and recordkeeping and some regulations of certain livestock markets also.

**Feedlot Tour June 17:** This tour, in the Ireton-Hawarden area of Sioux County, features three small (<1000 head), non-permitted feedlots. The focus for the day is on building or expanding the feedlot operation. Two of the feedlots have an existing hoop building and have recently constructed open feedlots. The third feedlot is in the early stages of constructing an open feedlot. Topics to be covered include:

- ◆ Small Iowa Feedlot Plan
- ◆ Process for Growth and Financial Assistance
- ◆ Growing Responsibly and Successfully
- ◆ Iowa Feedlot Rules and Regulations
- ◆ Capturing Manure Value
- ◆ Sixmile Watershed Project
- ◆ Implementing Bio-Security Measures on Your Farm

For more details or to request a flier, call the Sioux County Extension Office (712.737.4230) or Sioux County NRCS (712.737.2253).

**Feedlot Tour June 18:** This Cattle Farming Matters tour is in the Everly-Royal area of Dickinson & Clay Counties. The first stop at 10:45 a.m. is at the Fallon Feedlot north of Everly. This feedlot has a hooped beef barn and open lots. A luncheon program will be held in the Hap Ketelsen Community Center, Everly. The program will be similar to the 17<sup>th</sup>, except the V.I.P., Verified Iowa Processed PVP program will be officially introduced. The two other feedlots to be toured are the Ron Christensen and Kent Christensen feedlots in the Royal area. These operations have newly concreted open lots and monoslope deep bedded barns. For details or to request a flyer, contact the Clay County Extension Office (712.262.2264).

**Feedlot Tour June 19:** This Cattle Farming Matters tour will begin with lunch in the Dedham Community Center at 11:30 a.m. Following a similar set of speakers two open feedlots will be toured. The Iowa Cattleman's Association, Iowa Beef Industry Council, Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers, Iowa Beef Center and ISU Extension are sponsoring these tours. For details or to request a flier, contact the Carroll County Extension Office (712.792.2364).

**Pasture Walk June 25:** The Ted and Bob Paulsrud farms near Danbury, showcases the stewardship and conservation practices of a commercial and a registered cow-calf operation. The Paulsrud's have substantially changed their grazing operation and are currently establishing a wildlife habitat. Topics to be featured at the Pasture Walk include:

- ◆ How to improve pasture fertility economically
- ◆ How to score a pasture and use this to make management changes
- ◆ Using co-product feeds to increase pasture carrying capacity
- ◆ How the new Farm Bill will impact forage-based producers
- ◆ An update on Beef Quality Assurance

For more details or to request a flyer, call the Ida County Extension Office (712.364.3003), Ida County NRCS (712.364.2126) or Woodbury County NRCS (712.943.6727).

**Feedlot Tour July 8:** The western Lyon County tour is a "preview" of four feedlots (under 1000 head) that will be making substantial changes in the way manure is handled in their open feedlot. Participants will have the opportunity to see how these producers will handle environmental challenges in their feedlot through:

- ◆ Clean water diversion with an earthen berm
- ◆ Developing new vegetative filter strips
- ◆ Constructing solids settling systems
- ◆ Maximizing the efficiency of limited land area for manure management
- ◆ Utilizing terraces to control soil erosion

For more details or to request a flier, call the Lyon County Extension Office (712.472.2576) or Lyon County NRCS (712.472.4021).

## Meat Prices Has to Go Up (part two)

*By Dave Stender, ISU Extension Swine Field Specialist*

Lean hog price next summer is over \$67/cwt live (\$90/cwt carcass) price. By historical standards that is a tremendously high price, but with today's cost of production cost the average producer could be just above breakeven cost.

Feed cost today is averaging over \$200/ton or about \$0.11 for every pound of feed. The typical farrow-to-finish uses 3 to 3.5 pounds of feed per pound of gain. The feed cost of gain calculates to about \$38.5/cwt live gain. Non-feed cost will vary, typically it has been about \$20/cwt, but with energy, transportation, building materials and labor prices going up, the breakeven for the typical swine

operation will be about \$60/cwt. The average breakeven for pork operations over the years has been in the \$40/cwt range.

The good news for pork producers is that pork exports are larger than last year, because the world pork supply is shrinking and the low value dollar makes US pork a bargain. Prices for lean hogs are now close to the producer's breakeven cost. However, with highly volatile grain and livestock markets producers could see more red ink. Chris Hurt, an agricultural economist, says that pork farm losses may total \$3.8 billion dollars in 2008.

Pork producers are growing a record number of pigs so far this year; with pigs already on the ground we may see more economic problems in the swine industry as increased season slaughter pressures prices this fall.

If you are buying meat, remember the producer's share a small part of the final retail price. Meat prices will have to only go up about \$0.30/lb to cover the increased corn cost of the swine producer.

### **Response to High Cost of Production ---Fine Tuning Your Operation: Attend the Advanced Reproductive Seminar**

Pork producers interested in learning more about new technology and management methods to help achieve a high and efficient sow reproductive rate, should plan to attend an advanced swine reproduction seminar in South Sioux City, Neb., on June 10.

"Keynote speakers North Carolina State University professor Billy Flowers and University of Nebraska-Lincoln swine specialist Don Levis will provide information and insights on on-site semen management, reproductive herd performance tips and trouble-shooting breeding performance problems," Stender said. "In the afternoon, they'll also present a swine reproduction question-and-answer panel."

Stender will talk about strategic ways to cut output while retaining the ability to benefit individual herds and operations, as well as the industry as a whole.

The seminar begins with registration at 9:30 a.m., with the program running from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Marina Inn, 510 E 5th Street, South Sioux City, Neb. The \$25 fee includes lunch and materials; the meal will not be guaranteed for those not pre-registered. To preregister, contact Stender at the Cherokee County Extension office by phone at (712) 225-6196 or by e-mail at [dstender@iastate.edu](mailto:dstender@iastate.edu).

Program sponsors are ISU Extension, Iowa Pork Industry Center, Iowa Pork Producers Association, University of Nebraska Extension and Nebraska Pork Producers Association.