

Tracking Animal Health

To manage your cows' health begin by measuring it. Ironically, the best way we have to track animal health is by tracking disease. Until you make the commitment to measure (record and track) key diseases, you will not be able to manage them.

There is no other issue that relates more directly to the success of a dairy than the health of its cattle. There is not another aspect of the herd that producers and their advisors spend more energy on than keeping their cattle healthy and happy so they can live long productive lives. Yet many of those same producers and their advisors have not yet setup a system for tracking animal health so that disease instance can be measured and managed. Setting up such a system has never been easier.

Follow these steps

- 1) List the diseases you want to track.
 - 2) Discuss diagnosis protocols with your veterinarian and write them down.
 - 3) Record diseases as they occur.
 - 4) Review incidence regularly.
- 1) Diseases to Track - You might add or subtract one or two but this list will give you a good start at tracking your herd's health.

A) Clinical Mastitis, (and culture results)	B) Milk Fever
C) Retained Placenta	D) Metritis
E) Sore Feet (or Lameness)	F) Pneumonia (or respiratory)
G) Displaced Abomasum	H) Scours
 - 2) Ask your veterinarian to help you setup a diagnosis protocol so that you can consistently identify each disease. If we see a change in number of cases in your herd, we want to be confident the change is from the environment and not just the way you are identifying the sickness.
 - 3) If you use herd management software recording and monitoring your herd's diseases should be very easy. Call Dairy One if you need help. If you do not use herd management software, consider it, or setup a simple paper system on which you can write these problems in the order they occur. Your Dairy One Technician can do it for you.
 - 4) Dairy Comp 305 and Scout offer many ways to track and review animal's health.

Ways to Monitor Disease Incidence

Following is a table by month of events from Dairy Comp 305 (we can also show it by days in milk). Disease incidence can tell a lot. This dairy is only beginning to record diseases.

- Command : EVENTS -													
# Event	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1 FRESH	303	27	16	26	19	24	27	27	29	26	23	24	35
2 OK	246	14	18	25	23	26	23	7	25	17	23	27	18
3 RECK	8	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
4 HEAT	100	12	14	11	4	8	2	1	3	7	13	16	9
5 BRED	971	80	82	91	99	84	72	72	96	89	69	76	61
6 PREG	306	34	22	28	28	24	26	31	21	1	23	34	34
7 OPEN	519	42	55	56	58	56	43	37	67	14	31	36	24
8 PREV	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
9 MOVE	1775	204	144	119	132	142	130	154	192	163	104	125	166
11 DRY	182	9	8	17	23	15	14	21	11	12	16	16	20
12 ABORT	36	5	3	1	2	3	3	3	4	3	5	3	1
13 DNB	109	7	8	4	4	9	1	9	3	11	37	5	11
14 SOLD	137	11	13	10	10	8	2	13	14	13	18	8	17
15 DIED	18	1	2	3	0	1	4	0	2	1	0	1	3
16 CHECK	112	8	13	12	10	10	13	12	11	10	1	9	3
18 XID	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20 MAST	40	0	0	0	0	10	7	10	6	7	0	0	0
21 RP	34	1	3	1	3	1	6	3	6	6	1	2	1
22 MLKFVR	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
25 LUT	726	51	74	53	41	43	71	56	64	66	83	52	72
30 DA	18	2	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	0	1
31 KETOSIS	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
35 PNEU	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
37 TREAT	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

EVENTS\5S7W

Event	Total	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
FRESH	26	0	6	3	2	3	2	10
OK	16	0	16	0	0	0	0	0
BRED	81	8	2	17	31	5	9	9
MOVE	127	7	4	34	6	46	10	20
DRY	30	0	15	0	0	0	15	0
ABORT	5	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
SOLD	19	5	0	0	4	3	6	1
DIED	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
CULTURE	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0
LAME	31	2	23	2	0	3	0	1
MAST	18	0	1	3	3	8	2	1
OFFFEED	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
PNEU	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
RP	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
INF	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
TREAT	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
TOTALS	380	24	80	59	50	77	48	42

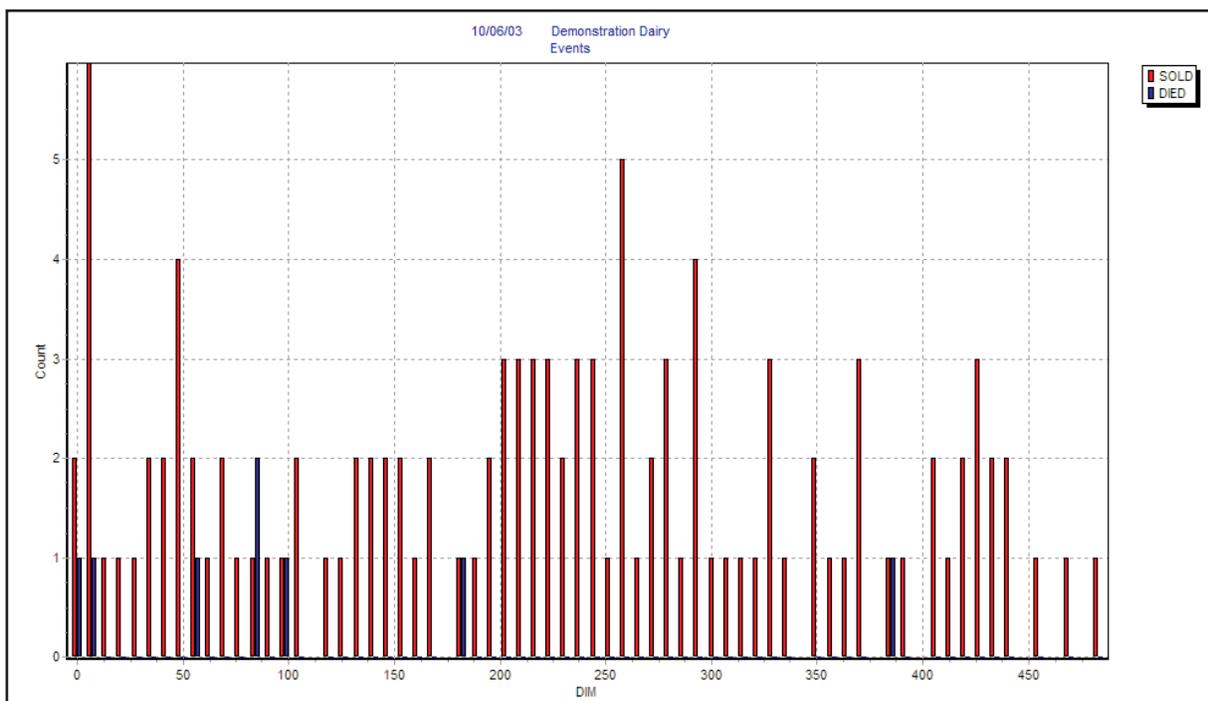
As you can see this events table shows a of all events, not only diseases. It is helpful to track the number of breedings you have each month and sometimes we want to consider the number of diseases such as Retained Placentas as a portion of the number of animals that calved.

DA's appear to be holding steady, RP's might be showing a higher incidence than earlier this year. It also appears they recently began recording Clinical Mastitis (MAST).

Consider tracking your events weekly, rather than monthly with this report. We recommend setting this command in the Dairy Comp Task Scheduler to print weekly. It lists a summary of all of the events that have occurred in the last seven days. "Left clicking on one of the events will create a list of the animals.

When do animals leave the herd? Many animals leaving in early lactation can mean that they are not making the transition metabolically. (Of course if the dairy is using the strategy of holding animals through the dry period for their calf, and then selling them, you will have to take that into account when you read this.

This EGRAPH (selecting sold and died, by DIM) shows there has not been a lot of animal loss in early lactation.



While the graph of sold and died animals by days in milk can indicate undiagnosed diseases it is a delayed method of looking for opportunity. We do not want to wait for animals to leave the herd to decide to intervene in animal health maintenance systems. Tracking disease incidence could bring us to an intervention decision months sooner than looking at animals leaving the herd.

This makes it easy to see when most of the mastitis cases are occurring as well as how many animals are leaving the herd in the first 60 days.

Once you setup a method for tracking sickness in your animals and begin looking at it regularly, you can respond constructively to changes in your herd's environment that reduces the animals health and productivity.