

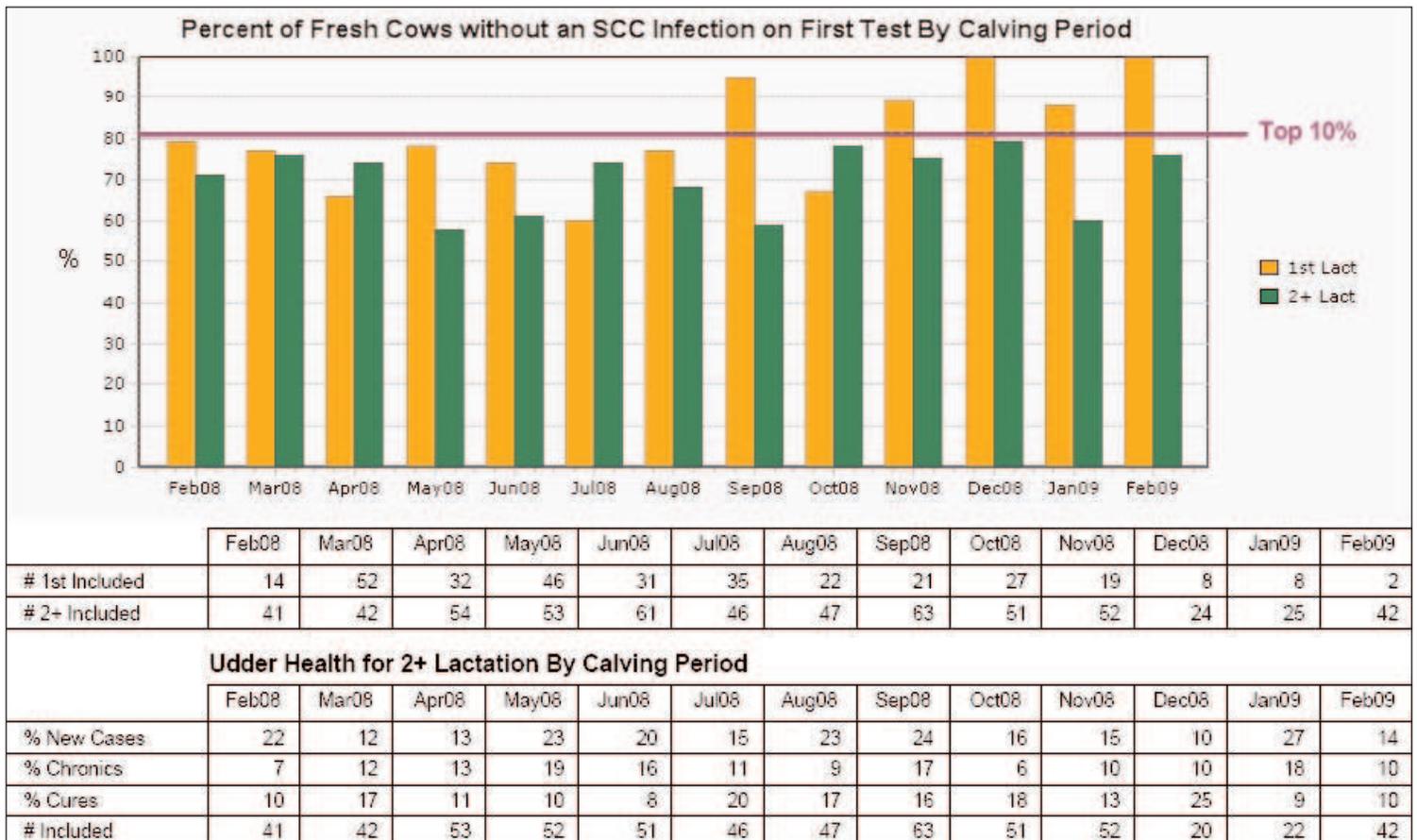
DHI-403 DHIA Report: Turning Data Into Helpful Information

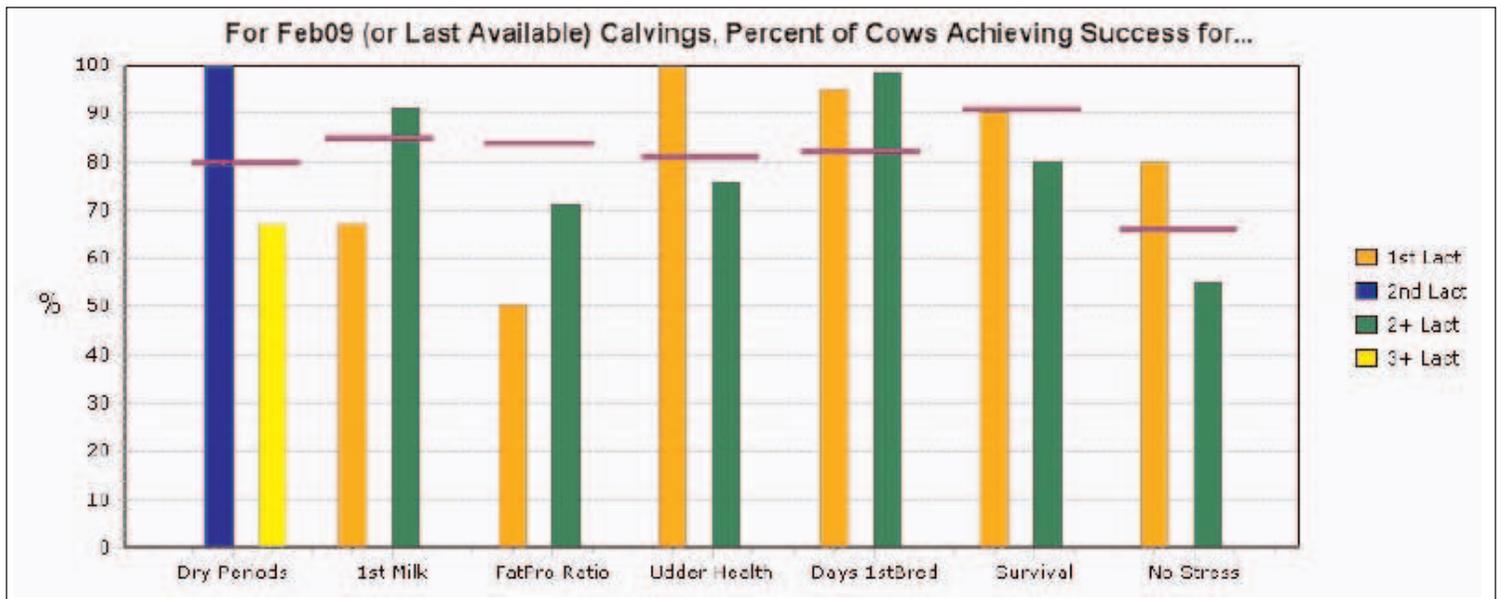
By George Cudoc

Reporting data can be considered the first important step in managing a dairy herd. The second step involves turning that data into information that you can use to more successfully manage your cows. Having the information one piece at a time, although useful, sometimes falls short in evaluating herd management plans and actions. Dairy One members have the option of processing data in a number of ways and at a number of places. Selecting summary-type reports may help you “connect the data dots” and look at important segments of herd management. Let us look at a report that focuses on multiple pieces of information to help you evaluate your transition program.

The DHI-403 report for DRMS at Raleigh is a tool that summarizes transition cow management using a number of measures. The data collected on cows is turned into information and presented in a graphical format. Both large and small herds will find the information useful, and the number of calvings per month will determine if the data is monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly. Each measure used will be on a 100-point scale, indicating the level of success we experience. Goals are set using benchmark data for the top 10% of herds within a similar herd size range. Five of the measures use information during the period from dry off to 40 days in milk. Two measures use a time period beyond and the graphs may look a bit different. The report finishes with a list of cows that have calved recently and have low production, high SCC, or both. With those cows listed, other stressors that may have played a role are highlighted.

Transition is the time of a cow's life from dry-off date to 40 days after calving. This gives each cow ample opportunity to rebound from the stress she experiences giving birth. Successful transition can be defined as the ability to change a cow from dry status to production at a level equal to or better than the genetic potential that she possesses. The DHI-403 report from the Dairy Records Management Systems (DRMS) focuses on measures to help us evaluate transition.





The first measure we have in this evaluation looks at the number of days dry and the percent of time we achieve our goal of 30 - 70 days. The current belief is that while we can shorten days dry from the traditional 60 day goal, we must strive to manage for at least 30 days. Dropping below this threshold is likely to result in a 5% - 15% drop in milk. On the other hand, cows with extended dry periods of more than 70 days may produce 10% less milk. We should strive for 80% or higher success.

The second measure looks at milk produced on the first test day. This milk is used to project the probability that milk will be at least equal to the current RHA milk on a mature equivalent basis. We can use this to evaluate adequate dry matter intake. Higher milk starts can lead to higher peak milk and higher total production.

The third measure, a butterfat and protein percent comparison on the first test using Fat Protein Ratio (FPR), gives insight to intake, body weight maintenance, and metabolic disorders. A large percentage of the cows should fall between a range of 1.0 and 1.6 using this ratio. Benchmark data says we should see 82% of the cows in this range.

The fourth measure based on first test milk examines success in udder health. High SCC on first test may point to problems with dry cow treatment or dry pen conditions. The percent of cows not infected or a SCC score less than 4.0 at first test is tracked. The top 10% of the industry achieves 80% cows not infected. Additional information is also included by breaking the herd into new cases, chronics, and cures. New infections are described as cows low at dry off and high at calving. Chronic cows are high at both times. Cures are high at dry and low at calving.

A fifth measure looks at reproduction of the herd. This measure is not as current as the previous measures because it takes longer to be able to evaluate. The time will be different for each herd and is based on what we select for the VWP plus 30 days. Successful transition will prepare cows to be healthy enough to cycle and be bred during this time. The top 10% of the industry achieves 80% plus on this measure.

The sixth measure looks at survival rate, one of the biggest losses on many dairies. Successful transition increases the chance that cows will survive past their first 60 DIM. Not only have the cows that left in the first 60 days not paid for their dry period, but we lose the most profitable period of the lactation at peak milk. It is important to track cows leaving that have salvage value versus those that die with no salvage value. We should strive for 90% or more cows staying in the herd more than 60 days after calving.

The last measure is the percent of cows that go through transition in an unstressed state using some of the 6 measures above, as well as others like calving ease, twins, stillbirths, and abortions. The list provided shows current cows with stressors, and you may be able to still address them.