MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE ENHANCEMENT

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Today, herd management software provides a way to immediately know what is happening in your herd. Changes in dairy management software allow you to use the most up- to-date records in managing your herd.

Protocols define a list of things to be done to cows today or within a specified period of time. Procedures trigger protocols that reflect management activities associated with an event during the cow's lactation.

For instance, certain activities are related to freshening, breeding and drying off. After calving you monitor the temperature on fresh cows each of the first 5 days, check urine pH on day 3, vaccinate on day 10 and move to a milking group on day 15. Develop a protocol that has these activities. Then enroll cows that are going to be fresh into the protocol. As cows pass through the timed event, the daily printed list includes their index number, the reason they are on a list, and what needs to be done. This list is specific to the task(s) that need(s) to be done to that cow today. You create lists by group/pen, person responsible for doing the activity, or other factors that limit the number of cows for that protocol.

The radio frequency identification (RFID) eartags fit right into this technology. Protocols are tied to cows by using the RFID eartags. When a cow on the list has her RFID eartag read with a wand, she appears on the hand held computer display. In addition, an audible sound for that activity can come from the hand held. You can customize what sound is made. A herdsman rapidly goes through a pen of cows, identifying which cow needs to have what action performed.

Once an action is performed, use the same hand held computer to enter the activity associated with the event. Data entry no longer takes place in the office. It takes place at the location where the action occurred. This improves accuracy of data entry. Data may be wirelessly transmitted to your main computer to update the records or a "hard wired" synchronization process can be used.

Either way the hand held device needs to "communicate" with your main herd records to keep them up to date.

As more field entry of data occurs periodical reconciliation with your production database insures that only cows that are in the herd are in the active database. Many herds have phantom cows that have not had a milk weight for 6 months or more and are coded as still in the active herd. Perhaps a few of these are dry; however some may have left the herd without being recorded in the production database.

These enhancements are available from most herd management software providers. Adopting these procedures is another way to improve your management ability; thereby more efficiently managing your dairy.