

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

MAKE ACCURATE COMPARISONS – USING DairyMetrics

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Dairy management is managing numbers. Whether you are managing the financial or production side, you must know when your operation is doing well versus when it is not.

In recent years, your ability to manage numbers has gotten easier. In the 1960-80's, one role of Dairy Herd Improvement (DHI) was to provide lists of average production variables for publication. Using that information, participants were able to determine where their herd was in relation to other “comparable” herds. This allows a comparison, but there was no opportunity to identify groups that more closely represented the herd that was being compared.

Recently, DHI has moved from publishing numbers to allowing members and consultants to freely access the DHI database and compare their herd against other herds. This is now a no cost option. By using DairyMetrics, you customize your request to control the herds to which you compare a herd's performance.

To use the system simple access DairyMetrics via the web at: <http://www.drms.org/>. When you get to the introductory screen, select DairyMetrics from the drop down menu.

Proceed through the sign on screen. Once you have entered the herd screen, you are able to filter on many variables. For example, in this case since the herd has 93 cows, I elected to compare it against all other herds at DRMS that had between 20 and 99 cows. The output contains the data for the herd as well as its percentile rank in regards to the herds to which it is being compared. Percentile rank is simple a category into which the observed herd is located.

Percentile rank ranges from 1 to 99. If you look at the percentile for number of cows, the herd is in the 30th percentile. This means that 30% of the herds have 93 or fewer cows while 70% have

more than 93 cows. Seventy percent of the herds are larger than this herd. The next set of information refers to the “Filtered Group”. I had selected for a group that had between 20 and 99 cows. The output provides the number of herds in that category as well as the mean and standard deviation. The values for the lowest and highest group are also listed.

DairyMetrics	Selected	74150135		Filtered Group				
		Data	Percentile	Number of Herds	Average of Herds	Std Dev	Lowest Herd	Highest Herd
GENERAL								
Number of Cows		93	30%	6,237	138	72	30	745
Num of Cows-1st Lact		38	43%	6,235	50	33	1	509
Num of Cows-2nd Lact	0020 to 0099	31	49%	6,237	37	18	20	99
Num of Cows-3rd+ Lact		24	16%	6,222	50	30	1	330
PCT Number of Cows-Year Change		7	76%	6,102	3	16	-67	315
PCT in Milk on Test Day		87	55%	6,237	86	6	24	100
Days in Milk		252	63%	6,237	205	32	30	465

If a consultant is using DairyMetrics, he could construct a group of his clients that are referred to as a peer group. He could have several peer groups. For example, one group could be all his clients, while a second peer group could be only his clients that have freestalls. In this manner, he is able to compare one herd against what all the other herds with similar “environments” are doing. This is extremely helpful in identifying when things start to change and provides the consultant with real time comparisons to determine what is happening in the herds. If the change is across all herds, it could be due to environment. However, if that change is only on the herd in question, that change could be due to a management/condition that is taking place at that dairy.

However, a consultant is only able to access your data if you allow him to do so. This access is controlled through your Remote Access Code (RAC). If you change consultants or want to restrict access to your data, contact DRMS and they will change your RAC number.

Many options exist through which you can make comparisons. However, knowing what the numbers are and where they came from are important in making sound management decisions. Remember, DairyMetrics is free to all producers that have records processed through DRMS.