



Dairy Records | Are they working for you?

Record keeping on a dairy can take on many forms; notes written on a stall card, pen and notebook, pre-printed forms, smartphone apps, and computer programs. Each is unique, but they accomplish the same common goal: recording daily events on your dairy.

Chances are you're already recording some events on your farm; but what are you doing with the data you're collecting? Are you recording the things that really matter to you? Most people would say yes, they know what their pregnancy rate is, they know how to find their high SCC cows. But do you know what your calf mortality rate is? Do you know what your ketosis rate is? Are these numbers important? Are you recording the right information to find out what you want (need) to know?

Often times, when evaluating farm records, we realize that what we want to know isn't being recorded. For example, you feel like you're treating more wet calves for pneumonia. Are you recording who is being treated, what they have been treated with and how many times they have been treated? Is there a way to find all of this information for the last 12 months? Ok, let's say you have all of this data. Now you can determine your annual and monthly incidence of pneumonia in this group of calves. Which can be extrapolated to determine seasonal patterns, and help troubleshoot what might be causing an increased pneumonia incidence. Furthermore you are able to determine whether your treatment protocols are working and plan for future outbreaks. Now, let's take this a step further, you have an excess of heifers entering the breeding pen and you're not sure who you want to cull. First you pull out the heifers that are falling behind the rest of the group, but that still isn't enough. Now you have options, do you make your culling decisions based on dam data alone OR do you combine that with calf health information to identify those heifers who may appear clinically normal but are likely to have a difficult transition into the milking herd due to some lingering effects of calthood disease?

These various management decisions can be better made by taking 30 seconds to write down or enter treatment information into your record system of choice. If you're not sure how to find and apply this or any other information, our veterinarians would be more than happy to assist you.