UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS)
Department of Animal Sciences

Dairy Update

Quarterly Newsletter **Vol. 9 No. 2** **Spring 2009**

Stimulus Package for Your Dairy

David R. Bray

It is time to fine tune your operation. With $25.00 milk prices everything is easy and bad habits are accepted. In these economic times you need to plan for all the enterprises on your dairy. What makes money, what must we do, what can we stop doing? Are you going to just ride this bad spell out and hope you are still here when things get better and then you can continue bad management practices?

1. Cull Junk Cows. Low milk prices that are below your cost of production are a double whammy to your pocket book. By culling junk, it allows for more room, feed, cool air in the summer in the barn and production will increase per cow because they are not overcrowded. Cows will lay down more; you will have less feet problems, and less mastitis etc.

2. Take better care of dry cows and heifers. You may be able to put close up cows and springer heifers in barns in the summer if your junk cows are out of them. This will allow them to be healthy at calving and produce more.

3. Are you taking care of pastures? I still believe that Careless Weed is the greatest cause of mastitis at calving in the Southeast. In the Southeast we have the highest rate of blind quarters at calving in heifers. Carless Weed cuts the teats of the cows and heifers. Flies are drawn to the blood and damage the teat ends and they also transport bacteria from one animal to another. Mow pastures often, spray and kill weeds also.

4. Culling junk cows allows you to be more productive. Don't overcrowd. Overcrowding is an accepted practice in many places. It may have its place in high milk price times, but is a killer in low pricing times. It makes every cow less efficient, less milk, bad feet, low reproduction, more manure, and more water used in the waste management system.

5. Removing junk cows allows you to do a better job of milking cows. Less mastitis, higher quality milk, lower SCC and bacteria counts. You don't need a milk quality penalty along with everything else.

6. Less milking time allows for maintenance of milking equipment and more time spent on the management of cows.

Contact Dave Bray at drbray@ufl.edu or call (352) 392-5594.

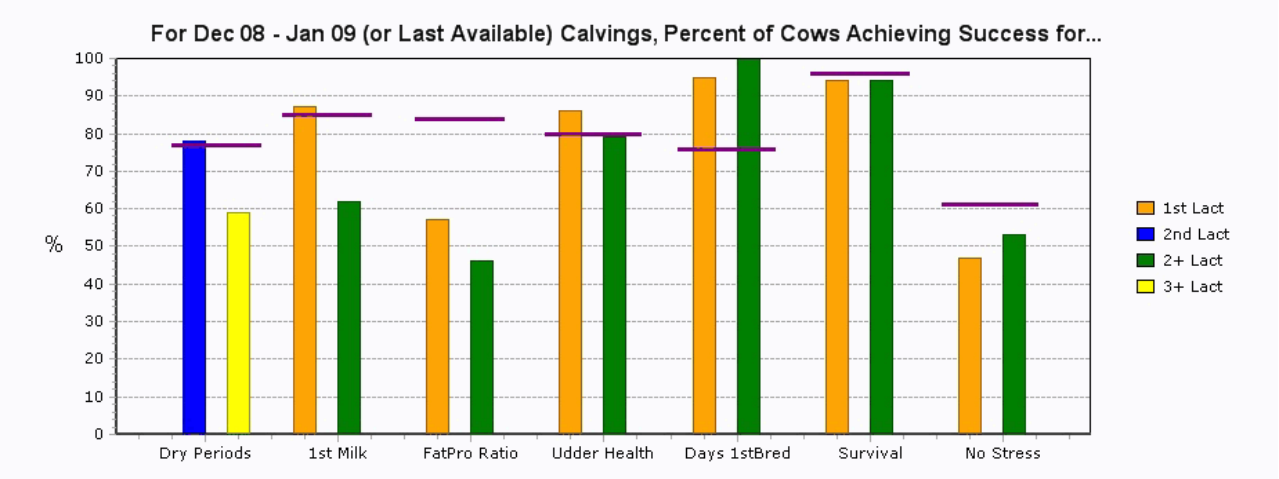
DHIA Offers New Transition Cow Management Evaluation

Daniel W. Webb

The transition period for dairy cows is generally considered to present one of the most significant management challenges. Major physiological stress is experienced by high producing dairy cows during the period from dry-off to 40 days post-calving.

A new summary available to DHIA herds can help evaluate how well your herd is dealing with this important management phase. The report enables managers to focus on seven monitors for transition cow performance. These monitors include: first milk, fat-protein ratio, udder health of fresh cows, days to first breeding, survival to 60 days and specific stress factors at calving. These include difficult calving, stillbirth, twins and abortion.

Which elements of Transition Cow Management are working well? This summary graph includes one set of bars for each of the 7 Management Monitors. The colored bars represent the performance for cows that calved in the most recent period. The purple horizontal line on each bar marks the performance of the top 10% herds for the specific Management Monitor. Performance higher than the purple line means that yours is a "top herd", and lower performance indicates an opportunity for improvement. This graph should identify area(s) that deserve management attention in the most recent period.



The DHIA Transition Cow Management report includes 7 additional graphs, one for each of the monitors for transition cow performance. The report is available as an option for herds whose records are processed at DRMS. Herds can sign up by asking their DHIA Field Technician or send email to the Southeast DHIA office. *Contact Dan Webb at dwwebb@ufl.edu or call (352) 392-5592.*

New Electronic Mailing List for UF Dairy Extension Announcements: UFL-DAIRYUPDATE-L

Albert De Vries and Daniel W. Webb

[UFL-DAIRYUPDATE-L@LISTS.UFL.EDU] is the new electronic mailing list of Dairy Extension at the University of Florida. The electronic mailing list will be used by UF Dairy Extension to send subscribers emails about dairy extension programs, new factsheets, newsletters or other dairy news from the University of Florida that we believe are of interest to those involved in the Florida Dairy industry.

We have populated the list with email addresses of many dairy producers in Florida and allied industry folks that serve the Florida dairy industry. Subscription to the list is voluntary. You can subscribe and unsubscribe by visiting http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu/dairyupdate-L.shtml.

UFL-DAIRYUPDATE-L is solely used for messages related to dairy programs for adults from the University of Florida. Only the list owners can send emails to the electronic mailing list. We will not forward announcements from third parties. The number of messages sent to UFL-DAIRYUPDATE-L will be restricted to no more than twenty per year.

UFL-DAIRYUPDATE-L is owned by Dr. Daniel W. Webb and Dr. Albert De Vries. To contact the owners of this list, send an email to DAIRYUPDATE-L-request@LISTS.UFL.EDU.

When Do Cows Leave Your Herd?

Daniel W. Webb

New DHIA summaries are being released this spring. Soon, herd owners will be able to analyze the flow of cows leaving the herd more completely. In preparation, we looked at four herds to determine how the data might look. The data represent 12 months from March 1, 2008 thru February 29, 2009.

Table 1. Number of cows sold and died by stage of lactation during 12-month period.

Herd	*Total Fresh*	*Total Sold*	*Total Died*	*Died First 30 Days*	*Died 30-59 Days*	*Died 60-89 Days*
1	391	82	43	14	5	2
2	2169	439	166	60	21	12
3	2856	620	206	110	20	3
4	3615	716	204	70	27	12

Table 2. Percent of cows sold and died by stage of lactation during 12-month period

Herd	*Total Fresh*	*Total Sold*	*Total Died*	*Died First 30 Days*	*Died 30-59 Days*	*Died 60-89 Days*
1	391	20.97	11.0	3.58	1.28	0.51
2	2169	20.24	7.65	2.77	0.97	0.55
3	2856	21.70	7.21	3.85	0.70	0.11
4	3615	19.81	5.64	1.94	0.75	0.33

The percentages in this table represent percent of cows freshened during the year. The above data will be available soon as an option in PCDART from the new Events Summary. *Contact Dan Webb at dwwebb@ufl.edu or call (352) 392-5592.*

Trans Fatty Acids Increase Feed Efficiency for Milk Production in Early Postpartum Holstein Cows

L. Badinga, C. Caldari-Torres, M.C. Perdomo, C. Risco, and C.R. Staples

Feed costs make up 35-50% of the total cost of producing milk in the United States. As margins tighten on dairy farms, many producers simply want to lower the feed bill. However, without paying attention to the nutrition program, cutting the feed bill can reduce dairy profits in the long run.

Little is currently known about specific effects or mechanisms by which dietary fats affect feed conversion efficiency for milk production. With the support of the SMI Milk Check-Off, Virtus Nutrition (Fair Lawn, OH) and Cargill (Minneapolis, MN), we conducted a feeding trial to examine the effect of feeding calcium salts of *trans* fatty acids (**TFA**) on feed conversion efficiency to milk in early postpartum Holstein cows. Healthy multiparous cows were assigned randomly to a control (highly saturated rumen bypass fat, **RBF**) or TFA-supplemented diet from approximately 4 wk before expected calving dates through 7 wk postpartum (Figure 1).

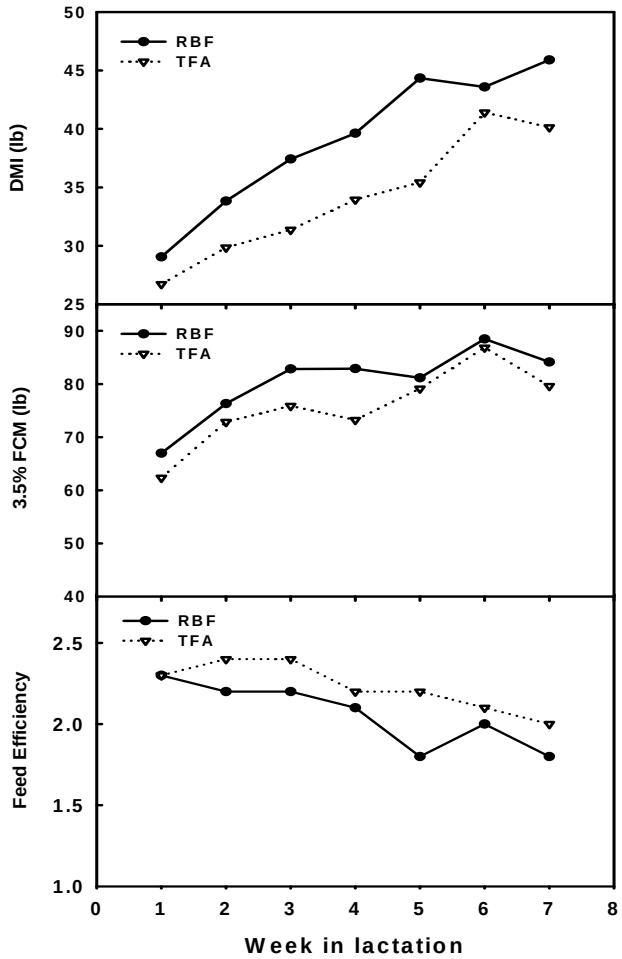


Figure 1. Dry matter intake (top), 3.5% fat-corrected milk (middle), and feed efficiency (bottom) of postpartum Holstein cows fed diets enriched in rumen bypass fat (RBF) or *trans* fatty acids (TFA).

On average, cows supplemented with TFA tended to eat less (39.1 < 34.1 lb 3.5% FCM; P = 0.13) but produced the same amount of 3.5% fat-corrected milk than those receiving the RBF supplement (75.7 lb = 80.4 lb; P = 0.24; Figure 1). As a result, feed efficiency (lb 3.5% FCM / lb DM consumed) was consistently higher for the TFA-supplemented than the RBF-supplemented group during the first 7 wk of lactation (average 7 wk-efficiency = 2.2 for the TFA group vs. 2.0 for the RBF group; P = 0.09). Results indicate that the benefit of peripartum TFA supplementation extends beyond the transition period and, thus, may constitute a producer-friendly means of lowering the feed bill and increasing the profitability of a dairy operation.

Badinga, Caldari-Torres, Perdomo and Staples are in the UF/IFAS Department of Animal Sciences. Risco is in the College of Veterinary Medicine. Contact Lokenga Badinga at lbadinga@ufl.edu; or call (352) 392-1958.

Rotational Grazing Field Day

Mary Sowerby and Yoana Newman

When feed bills and milk checks look discouragingly similar in amounts, what are your alternatives?

Rotational grazing to optimize forage production, minimize labor and eliminate expensive cropping equipment is one solution you are invited to investigate at 10 AM, Thursday, **May 14**, at Ron St. John's new South Point Dairy (old Levy County Dairy) west of Chiefland, Florida. At the field day, Ron St. John will explain why South Point is the third rotational grazing dairy he has developed and how his grazing dairies compare to his three "conventional" dairies. Australian Pete Hetherington, manager of South Point Dairy, will explain the rationale behind building both the parlor and pastures. Yoana Newman, UF Forage Extension Specialist, will discuss varieties of forage and how to maximize yields for grazing dairies. Jan Shearer, UF Dairy Veterinary Extension Specialist, will discuss keeping body condition on grazing cows and other herd health related problems and . . . a panel of graziers consisting of Al Wehner from Quitman, GA; Bubba Kurtz from Live Oak, Florida; Norm Nickerson from Wauchula, Florida; and Pete Hetherington will share their experiences and knowledge about rotational grazing. Rotational grazing is not for everyone, but if you have interest and questions, come join us at South Point Dairy.

Directions to South Point Dairy from the intersection of US 129 and Rt. 19/98: Go south on Rt.

19/98 0.9 miles to Rt. 345 (NW 100th St.), turn right (west); proceed 4.8 miles, turn right on CR 330 (NW 70th St.); go 1.9 miles to farm entrance on left at 8870 NW 70th St.

For a lunch count, please pre-register by calling Mary Sowerby at (386) 362-2771 or emailing (meso@ufl.edu) by May 11. Farm Credit is kindly helping sponsor lunch. There will be a $10 registration fee for the Field Day at the farm.

Mary Sowerby is the regional dairy extension agent in North Florida and Yoana Newman is a forage extension specialist in the UF Department of Agronomy.

Florida Dairy Farm Situation in 2009

Albert De Vries and Russ Giesy

We were asked to provide an outlook for the Florida dairy industry for 2009. Florida ranks 19th in the US for total milk production. Approximately 2.1 billion pounds of milk are produced annually in Florida on approximately 140 dairy farms. Florida dairy farms employ approximately 2000 employees directly. Approximately an equal number of people are employed in the allied industry (feed, supplies, milk marketing).

Milk prices determine approximately 90% of revenues on Florida dairy farms. The projected average price Florida farmers will receive for their milk in 2009 is $17.08/cwt (early March estimate). Revenues from the sales of cull cows and calves are estimated at $1.00/cwt. Total revenues on Florida dairy farms were approximately $526,000,000 in 2008, but are expected to decrease below $380,000,000 in 2009 as a result of very low milk prices. The cost to produce milk is estimated at $23/cwt for 2009, which is slightly less than the all time high cost of $24 in 2008. Total cost to produce milk in Florida in 2009 is $470,000,000.

Table 1. Profitability of Florida dairy farms, 2006 to 2009 (forecast)

Statistic	2007	2008	2009 (forecast)
FL milk price/cwt	$22.98	$23.50	$17.08
Total revenue/cwt	$24.72	$25.63	$18.08
Total cost/cwt	$21.44	$24.02	$23.00
Profit (loss)/cwt	$3.28	$1.61	($4.92)
Profit (loss)/farm	$529,000	$268,000	($709,000)
Profit (loss) all FL farms	$77,000,000	$38,000,000	($99,000,000)

The difference between revenues and costs leads to an expected loss of $4.92/cwt of milk produced. In 2009, revenues are expected to be less than 80% of total cost. The total expected loss for the Florida dairy industry for 2009 is $99,200,000, or $709,000 per Florida dairy farm (Fig. 1). Depressed profitability is expected for dairy farms throughout the nation.

More information: Albert De Vries, devries@ufl.edu.

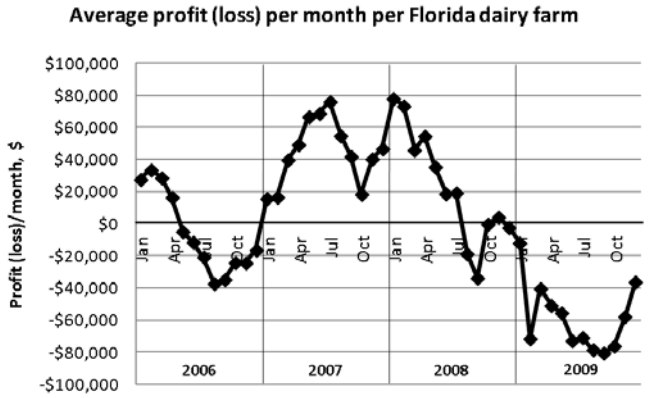


Figure 1. Average profit (loss) per month per Florida dairy farm, 2006 to 2009 (forecast)

Upcoming Dairy Meetings

- April 28, 2009: 46th **Florida Dairy Production Conference** in Gainesville, Florida. For program and registration, visit http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu. Speakers: Wendy Powers, Ken Nordlund, Mike Overton, Bill Jorgensen, Greg Bethard, Jan Shearer, Steve Washburn + a producer panel to discuss grazing and alternative dairy production systems.
- April 29, 2009. **PCDART/DHIA Workshop** in Gainesville. See http://dairy.ifas.ufl.edu.
- May 14, 2009: **Rotational Grazing Field Day** at South Point Dairy, west of Chiefland. See elsewhere in this newsletter. Contact meso@ufl.edu.
- June 18, 2009: UF/UGA **Corn Silage Field Day** in Tifton, GA. Contact Jerry Wasdin at jwas@ufl.edu.
- **Dairy Road Show**, TBA. Probably in the fall.

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