

MSC BUSINESS SERVICES

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May 2009

Low or No Cost Dairy Profit Ideas

For Cows (for today):

Feed Management Ideas:

- Keep feed as consistent as possible.
- Repair silage storage facilities (Goal: no water & air infiltration to limit spoilage).
- Keep feed in front of the cows, at all times. Push up feed, one more time per day.
- Feed for additional production (cost is 3 – 5 cents/cwt, value of milk is about 15 cents/cwt).
- Check the scales on your TMR wagon for accuracy.
- Keep the feed bunk storage clean (all loose feed is removed every day), remove 6" of face per day, and monitor spoilage.

Milking Ideas:

- Cow comfort matters, so allow cows time to chew their cud, let them lay.
- It is important that there be written milking protocols and that they be followed. Review the protocols with all milkers regularly then watch milkings to see that they are followed.
- Require all milkers to wear latex gloves when milking.
- Milk on time! Every time!
- For the first 6 -8 weeks after freshening, milk the fresh cows first & last during each milking (but watch for teat damage). A Cornell University study reported a result of up to a four (4) pound increase in per-day milk production over the entire lactation. These double milkings need to be at least 1 ½ to 2 hours apart, and feed must be adequate and excellent quality.
- Have milking equipment tested to insure everything is working properly.

Water:

- Milk is made up mostly of water, so an abundant supply is critical. Is there water within 10 steps for cows after milking is complete? All should be able to drink at once.
- Scrub and clean all waterers often. If the water doesn't look clean enough for you to drink, it is not clean enough!
- Test your well water quality.

General:

- How many hours per day is the barn lighted? Consider extending the time the lights are on by one hour.
- Clean the fans and check the fan belts regularly. Air movement is critical, and dirty fans move little air.
- Spend an extra 30 minutes per day on heat detection.

- Improve one item of sanitation each day. Look around, find something that is not clean, and scrub it.
- Are stalls clean enough for you to lie down in? If not, clean them.
- Work to lower SCC to less than 200,000. Teat dip.
- Heat is the enemy of milk production; fans on at 50 degrees, water on backs at 70 degrees. This applies to pre-fresh cows and heifers also.

Management:

- Begin a daily record of milk produced in total and per cow, by the milking. This should be recorded (by hand by the operator) in a way that enables comparison from day to day and with prior periods. Manual recording insures the numbers are looked at every day.
- Ask your vet what you can do, at little or no cost, to increase milk production by 1# - 2# per day per cow.
- Observe the taking of milk weights and samples, are they being taken accurately and handled properly?

For Calves (for the future):

At Birth:

- Calves need to be dry as soon after birth as possible. Consider using a hair dryer in winter.
- Iodine solution on all navels.
- Feed 3 – 4 quarts of Colostrum before 3 hours old. Feed an additional 2 quarts at 12 hours old.
- Avoid Colostrum from leaking cows. Toss any colostrum milk from Johnne's & other "sick" cows.
- Require the wearing of latex gloves when working with the calves.
- Free choice uncracked grain from birth.
- Warm water every day, and extra milk replacer is needed in cold weather.

First few Months:

- Pens should be clean, dry and draft free.
- Consider calf jackets in winter. Goodwill is a great source.
- Consider "Deep Bedding" all calves. Straw should be fluffed up to several inches in depth. Can you kneel in it for 1 minute?

General:

- Keep calves in pens 2 to 4 weeks after weaning to maximize rumen development and minimize stress.
- Sanitize all bottles and nipples, by adding brush cleaning to the cleaning process.
- No hay until 4 weeks past weaning.
- When first working with cows then moving to calves, consider changing clothes, washing hands, cleaning boots, etc.
- Sell any calf that does not get adequate colostrum within 18 hours of birth.
- Change attitude toward calves, they are precious investments in the future; not overhead!