

ONLINE FEED BROKERING

- Free Online Auction for Farmers
- Post Bids - let suppliers compete for your business
- Nationwide delivery available
- NO HIDDEN COSTS - your accepted bid is the price you pay

Brett von Berg *Buy or Sell* **Jim Sause**
 brett@feedtrader.com jim@feedtrader.com

P.O. Box 3194 • Clovis CA 93613
 tel:800.920.1622 • fax 559.347.9791 www.FeedTrader.com



He's young at heart and full of wisdom!

Do you need an uplifting light-hearted look at life?

Overall Wit & Wisdom can be found in the Progressive Dairyman each month. Bill Chitwood is an exciting, entertaining and humorous speaker. He is available now. Call 1-877-894-BILL(2455) for more information on how to make your next event outstanding.

Don't let your calf care be the weak link in your dairy operation!



After all, your calves are the future of the herd.

NEW!!!

Deluxe SL Calf Hutch (Standard Length)
 Completely Opaque
 10-Year Warranty
 "Stay open door" locks into place when opened
 The ONLY Manger with Splash Guard
 Left or Right offset door or full cutout for warmer climates

Animal House
 Rear feeding door for feeding calves quickly. The Door swings out of the way, can be left open, is easy to operate, with no handles and rear feeder snaps shut. It provides easy access and the feed stays out of the elements. It also has a rotating vent.

Deluxe EXL Calf Hutch (Extra Large) Advanced Design
 Most Advanced Ventilation System
 10-Year Warranty
 Molded From Heavy Gauge Plastic no need for steel frame

- The best ventilation on the market
- Advanced design
- Completely opaque
- 4 degrees cooler than the competition
- Side or rear feeding door
- 10-year warranty
- Molded from heavy gauge plastic (no need for steel frame)
- Larger size results in more protection from the weather and a healthier environment for the calf

CONTACT YOUR NEAREST DISTRIBUTOR TODAY!!!

WESTERN STATES	HATFIELD MFG	208-934-5182
KENTUCKY	BUNNMAN FEEDS	270-651-8000
OHIO	BECHTEL SERVICES	330-264-2889
PENNSYLVANIA	MARTINS FARM SUPPLY	717-597-4283
MIDWEST STATES	LOVAL-ROTH MFG	800-472-2341
COLORADO	I.B.A. DAIRY DEPOT	970-284-6599
TEXAS, OH, KS	HATFIELD MFG	208-539-9099
SOUTH DAKOTA	TRI-STATE NUTRITION	
NE, WY & MO	AND CONSULTING LLC	605-670-9950
	CENTRAL SOURCE	308-537-3326

AGRI-PLASTICS
 The Calf Housing Specialists

TOLL FREE:
1-888-231-3575
 or 1-905-945-3116
 FAX: 1-905-945-5359

E-MAIL: agriplastics@aol.com • WEBSITE: www.agri-plastics.net

PD EXCLUSIVE

Benchmarking dairy reproduction

Dr. Nate Zwald for *Progressive Dairyman*

Starting with this column and continuing each month, this space will include benchmarking data on a number of key performance indicators (KPI) for U.S. dairy producers.

The data has been compiled from 175 herds and about 182,500 cows located across the United States that are participating in Alta's AltaAdvantage® program. These herds average approximately 850 cows, with a minimum of about 200 cows, and a maximum of 4,000 cows. All herds are managed under commercial conditions, where income is mainly generated from the production of milk.

This program started in 2000, and a majority of herds included have been in the program since its inception. Herds participating in the program record and report management statistics such as herd somatic cell counts (SCC), calf mortality, age at first calving, service rate, average days open and more.

We take pride in the dairies that meet the program's management protocols. These dairies and their participation in the program make it possible to share this benchmarking data for you to compare to your dairy.

As easy as 1, 2, 3...

This data should provide the information to successfully carry out steps 1-3 of a proper benchmarking program. These steps are

- 1) compare your performance
- 2) identify best practices in management

3) implement those practices on your dairy

You can compare your performance to the numbers below. We will share with you some of the practices behind the performance of these herds, and you can start to think about how to implement ideas. We report the average for the herds we track, plus the average of the top 25 percent of dairies.

Reproduction benchmarking

This month we will focus on reproductive parameters. The overall reproductive performance of a dairy can be evaluated by looking at three things – service rate, conception rate and pregnancy rate. In **Figures 1 and 2**, we show the reproductive performance of the average and top 25 percent of AltaAdvantage herds. We break out the performance for first and second or greater lactation groups for comparison to your dairy.

"Pregnancy rate" has become the gold standard for measuring overall reproductive success (or failure) on today's commercial dairies. Pregnancy rate is a measure of the proportion of cows that become pregnant within a 21-day interval, following the conclusion of the voluntary waiting period. It can be estimated by multiplying the service rate by the conception rate.

It is easy to say, "we are at a 15 percent pregnancy rate, and we want to be at 20 percent or higher." Those statements will do little to uncover the root of the problem, so we must break down the reproductive measures much further to see where we can

Figure 1

Reproduction on AltaAdvantage dairies
 First-lactation cows

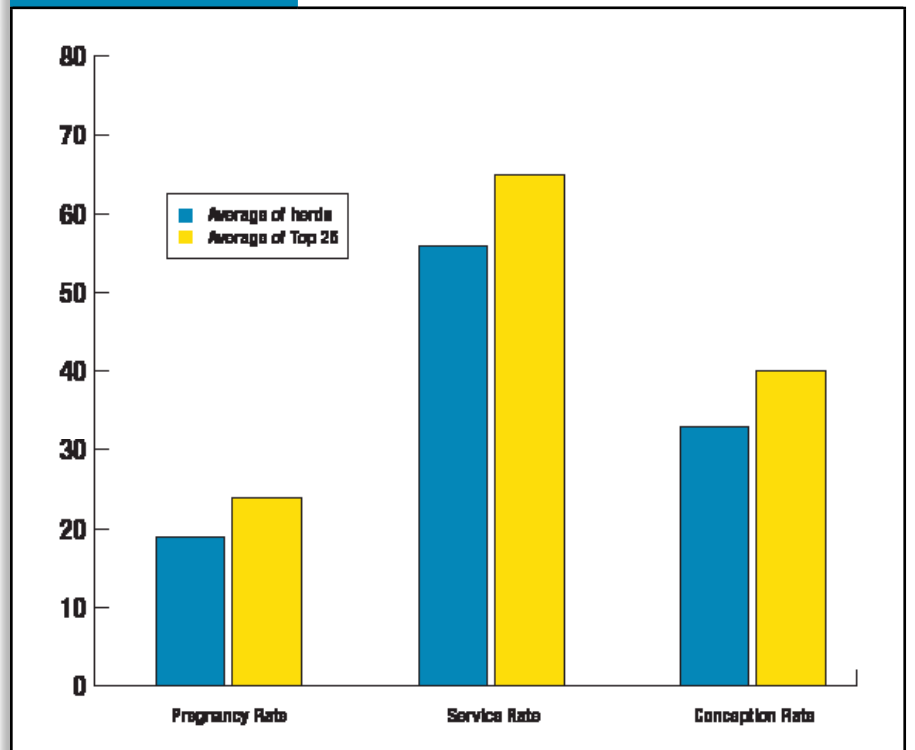
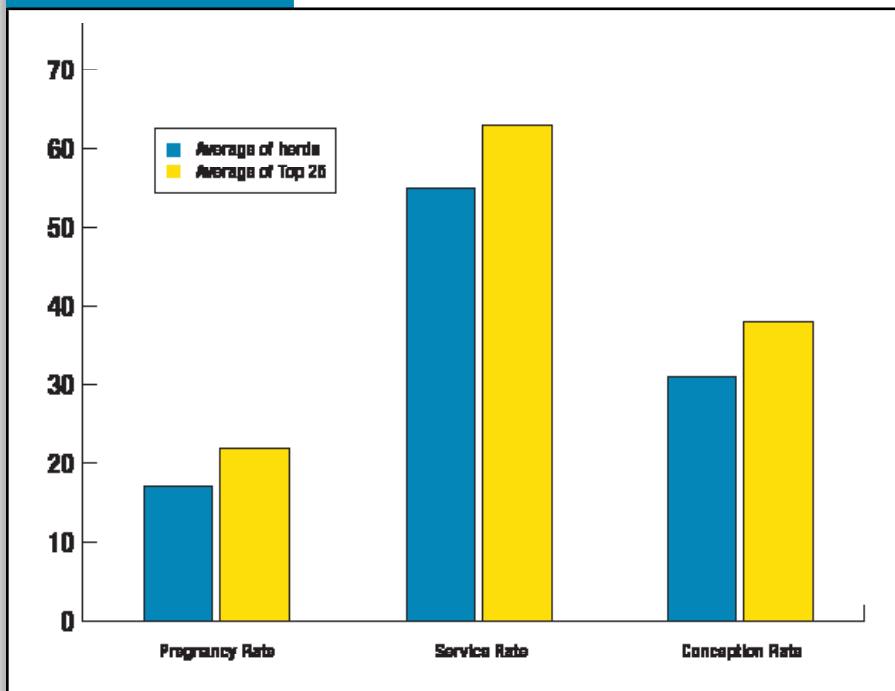


Figure 2

**Reproduction on AltaAdvantage dairies
2+ Lactation cows**



improve. Looking at conception rates and service rates individually can be the first step.

Practices of the top 25 percent

The most important part of benchmarking is to *identify* and *implement* potential processes and procedural changes that are feasible for your dairy. There are a number of success factors that are shared by the top reproductive performers compared. These can help guide what to focus on implementing on your dairy.

1) Compliance: Synchronization protocols are all about compliance.

If we miss 10 percent of the shots that are to be given each time, we end up with only 65 percent of cows that are actually properly synchronized. This has a huge effect on conception rates for synchronized heats. If your conception rate is substantially lower for synchronized heats than natural heats, this is the first place to look – and act.

2) Employee/technician commitment: There is a relationship between

retaining good employees and reproductive success.

The herds with the best reproduction have very alert and aware employees, plus high employee retention. Commitment to training, development, and some form of reward system can help drive that.

3) Proper transition and calving: Well-grown heifers that have nutritionally sound diets, enter the pre-fresh group on time and have good body condition at calving lead to an easier calving process.

Easier, shorter calving contributes to healthier appetites, which leads to less metabolic problems. This leads to more fertile cows when it comes to breeding time.

4) Good mastitis control: There is certainly a relationship between SCC and reproduction.

The 10 dairies with the highest pregnancy rates, also averaged somatic cell counts of 184! Clean dairy environments and consistent milking routines can contribute to mastitis control.

5) Proper nutrition: Cows with sub-clinical acidosis show less signs of estrus, and therefore the heat detection rate is generally lower in these herds.

The lag time between the onset of sub-clinical acidosis and reproductive problems makes this hidden problem difficult to measure, but it is one of the most frustrating



Nate Zwald

Director of
AltaAdvantage
Program

To contact Dr. Zwald,
e-mail him at
nzwald@altagenetics.com

www.progressivedairy.com

issues because it has no quick fix. However, preventative measures include avoiding an abrupt switch to a ration highly concentrated in grain for fresh cows, overmixing the total mixed ration (TMR) which breaks down feed particle size and sorting in the feedbunk.

In the next issue, we will look at benchmarking for calving performance, plus share some of the best practices we see on these herds. **PD**

**Help Wanted at
Progressive Dairy Publishing**

Assistant Editor

Idaho-based national publishing company is seeking full-time Assistant Editor for its four agriculture-related magazines.

Previous experience and/or education in journalism, communications or English preferred. Job responsibilities include copy editing, writing and some photography. Applicants should have copy editing and/or writing experience. Skills with Adobe Creative Suite programs and previous agriculture experience preferred. Salary will be negotiated D.O.E. To apply, please send a resume, clips and references to Walt Cooley at walt@progressivedairy.com or fax materials to (208) 324-1133.

Advertising Sales Coordinator

Idaho-based national publishing company is seeking full time Advertising Sales Coordinator for our four agriculture-related magazines. Previous experience or education preferred. Must be proficient with computers. Basic skills with Microsoft Office and Adobe InDesign preferred. Design skills a plus. Salary plus commission with pay D.O.E. Fax resume to Jeff Stoker's attention, (208) 324-1133 or e-mail to jeff@progressivedairy.com



(800) 320-1424 Phone
(208) 324-1133 Fax

Every Kernel Counts



Feed costs to fuel milk production are high. Preserve your corn's maximum value with Biotal® Buchneri™ 40788 for more aerobic stability, less heating and more energy maintained in feed. Biotal® Buchneri™ 40788 is the only inoculant FDA reviewed for increased aerobic stability in high moisture corn and silage.



Call 800-692-4700 for more information
or visit www.QualitySilage.com
for Best Management Tips.



© 2007 Biotal and Buchneri are registered trademarks of Lallemand Animal Nutrition