

Sharing ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed.



Hispanic milker training is one of numerous workshops sponsored by PDPW this fall.



Proper feed management is essential in preventing ketosis crashes.



PDPW reaches dairy producers across the continent.

Producers Share Experiences – What Works, What Doesn't

Making management decisions for your operation can be a difficult task. From finding ways to cut costs or trying out new feeding practices—not everyone does it the same. One of the greatest resources producers have when it comes to finding different ways to operate their business is each other.

Three Wisconsin dairy producers share their strategies regarding the changing times of agriculture and the current economic situation.

MEET THE PRODUCERS

Derek Orth

Derek works for his parents, Randy and Laura, on their 260-acre farm where they milk 200 cows, mostly registered Jerseys, and raise their own young stock as well as beef cattle, sheep, chickens,



Derek Orth

turkeys and pigs. The herd currently has a 16,373 RHA with a cheese yield of 1,940 pounds. The Orths run 420 acres, which consists of alfalfa, corn, wheat, oats and rye. In December of 2008, they moved their herd from a tiestall setup to a four-row, sand-bedded freestall barn with a 12-swing milking parlor, where the herd is milked twice daily.

Randy focuses on the crops, feed and finances while Derek concentrates on animal health, milking and employee management. Laura is an independent consultant for Pampered Chef.

Heather Jauquet

Synergy Family Dairy, located in Pulaski, is a freestall and parlor dairy that began in 2004 when Heather's parents, Gary and Linda Olson, sold their 50-cow dairy in Algoma and ventured into a partnership with Heather and her

husband, Jay. Gary, Linda and Heather keep busy at the dairy on a daily basis. They own 250 milking-age Holsteins, with a RHA of 25,631

pounds on 2X milking, and raise their young stock up to six months of age. The heifers are custom raised off farm until they are springers and then return to the farm. Synergy Family Dairy owns 260 acres of land on which they grow corn, alfalfa and rye all for forage.

Heather and Jay have three children: Mason, 10; Carter, 8; and Evan, 5. Jay works full-time for Alta Genetics as a regional sire analyst.



Heather Jauquet

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Producers

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Todd Borgwardt



Todd, Sue and Bennette Borgwardt

Sunnyside Dairy Farms LLC is owned by Todd Borgwardt and his uncle, Bill Borgwardt. They milk about 250 head of mostly registered Holsteins and crop about 700 acres of corn, alfalfa, soybeans and wheat. The herd boasts a 28,300 pound RHA with 4 percent fat and 3.1 percent protein.

Todd has been dairying fulltime for 13 years, since graduating from UW-Madison in 1996 with a degree in dairy science. In the fall of 1999, Todd became a partner in the family farm with his dad, Roger, and uncle, Bill, when they decided to build a freestall barn and parlor for 250 cows. Previously, they were milking just over 100 cows on two farms. They now milk in a double-eight herringbone parlor and have sand-bedded freestalls. Sunnyside Dairy Farms LLC raises all of their own youngstock and about 30 bulls that are sold for breeding. In the past year, Todd's father has retired as an owner, but still works on the farm daily.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How have your priorities been juggled due to today's dairy situation?

Orth: It's the little things that make a difference in today's economic climate. We constantly ask questions such as 'Should we run footbaths

everyday or can we get by with every other day?' or 'Can the cows go one more day before we have to put sand in again?'

We started using 100 percent sexed semen on the herd. I was very nervous, but after a recent pregnancy check, I won't complain about a 37 percent conception rate for the milking herd since beginning with sexed semen. Last year we bought much of our hay right out of the field, but this year we're going to wait until we need it and pay as we go.

Jauquet: I would have to say that our priorities have not changed much. We continue to try to produce a high-quality product profitably.

Borgwardt: Our priorities haven't shifted. The cows come first, and we have always tried to get the most out of our cows as efficiently as possible.

Q: In what areas of your operation have you made changes to compensate for today's tight dairy economy? What are some ways you have cut costs or have found ways of being more efficient on your operation?

Orth: I think the biggest thing we've done is try to do more things ourselves. We are putting in an hour or two more a day ourselves and learning new things to keep some extra money in our pocket.

We hired a 'milker' which has turned into one of the best investments for our operation. She has brought knowledge and experience and has been able to do things that have cut down costs.

We also added cottonseed to our diets and the herd has increased about 3 pounds of milk per cow per day. Also, to save money, we've been renting things like a manure pump, instead of purchasing our own.

Jauquet: Our herd is mostly

registered, and we sell a few bulls to AI each year. We are utilizing genomic testing on our elite females to help us select only the very best for embryo transfer work.

We also started milking our post-fresh/early lactation group four times a day. This has resulted in a significant production increase while remaining at two milking shifts per day.

Finally, we are keeping inventories very tight. One example, we are using up excess semen inventory.

Borgwardt: We watch everything a little closer. We try not to spend any more than we have to, so we just try not to buy more of anything than what we need.

Semen is one place where I watch it closely and don't carry near as much inventory as I used to. My criteria for bull selection has not changed, however.

See Economy on page 4

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Economy

Continued from page 2

Q: What lessons have you learned from the past or certain experiences that might help fellow producers?

Orth: We have learned that there is more than one company that wants our business. In the last year we have switched banks, feed companies, nutritionists, milk companies, veterinarians and dairy supply companies. We did price comparisons to decide where to do business. I feel that shopping for the best deal is one of the best things we ever did.

Jauquet: Be aware of how your stress level is affecting those around you—family, employees and fellow managers. A stressful situation can be made much worse by strained relationships. Make a

point to get out and talk to fellow producers or others who are good at lifting your spirits.

Borgwardt: You shouldn't take anything for granted or get greedy when times are good. Every time the market goes up it also goes down. It just seems that the swings are getting bigger and right now it is especially tough because our input costs are much higher than they have been in the past.

Q: What do you do differently that might help others?

Orth: We milk Jerseys. When I discuss current prices with others, mailbox prices always come up. Because of our components, our price per hundredweight is typically \$3 more than fellow Holstein breeders. Producers should look at 'pounds per square foot'

rather than 'pounds per cow.' Our barn is designed for 200 Holsteins but is built to hold about 260 Jerseys. Two-hundred Holsteins milking 80 pounds a day is only 400 more pounds a day than 260 Jerseys producing 60 pounds per day. And with the added components, longevity and health that Jerseys include, it's a no-brainer for us.

Jauquet: For those feeding milk replacer to calves, I would encourage you to take a look at the economics of feeding pasteurized milk. We recovered our investment in our pasteurizer in nine months and are thrilled with how our calves perform on it.

In addition, more than 50 percent of our AI breedings are done on visual heats. Yes, heat detection takes time, but the increased conception rates are worth it.

Borgwardt: We are not really doing anything differently.

Q: What is some advice you would give to someone just getting started in the dairy industry?

Orth: Surround yourself with positive people. There are a lot of people who can help you with your operation. Dairy farming is a lot of tough work and, when prices are in the dumps, it's really hard to stay optimistic about what you're doing. Do your homework. Research products and routines before you try them.

Having a good banker is really helpful especially when times are tough. They can help you run numbers and see what could be best for your operation.

Jauquet: Keep the lines of communication open with your lender, suppliers, consultants, neighbors. Those people can be extremely valuable resources

and they cannot help you if they don't know what your needs are. Take advantage of their experience.

Borgwardt: Be careful. Make sure that the situation you are in is good. There are a lot of good farmers who have been doing this a long time that are going through tough times right now.

Q: What is your favorite part about being a Wisconsin dairy producer?

Orth: For me it's the cows. I love getting up in the morning to see my girls. I also enjoy seeing the milk truck leave and think about the people in the community who are going to be enjoying delicious dairy products in the days to come.

I take pleasure in being a dairyman and being part of a family. Being raised on a farm has made us into better people, and we have developed our farm and have made our herd what it is today. All the way to the 'family' of producers from across the state and even the nation that we are a part of, it's an amazing feeling.

Jauquet: Wisconsin dairying is a strong family tradition with a lot of pride and experience passed down from generation to generation. There are many innovators in our industry who are willing to share what has or has not worked for them. We are a strong community always here to help each other out.

Borgwardt: The farm environment is a good place to raise a family, and I have confidence that this downturn will change. I also really like registered Holsteins, and it is the challenge of breeding the best cows that I possibly can that keeps it interesting.

By Brianna Ditzenberger

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Proper Management a Cure For Summer Ketosis Crashes

High temperatures and lofty humidity are often problematic for fresh cows during the hot, summer months. The added stress makes fresh cow transitions difficult and drops milk production. With proper feeding and management techniques, producers can cut ketosis outbreaks, making fresh cow crashes old news.

A common cause of summer crashes is the increased probability for ketosis.

"Ketosis is a metabolic disorder that occurs in dairy cattle when energy demands (e.g. high milk production) exceed energy intake and result in a negative energy balance," explains Dr. R. Tom Base, a veterinarian for Renaissance Nutrition. "This most commonly occurs in cows with poor appetites or fresh cows at a high level of production.

"Ketosis is important because it decreases feed intake in affected cows and greatly increases the risk of other diseases. For example,

ketosis results in almost a nine-fold increase in the risk of a cow getting a displaced abomasums (DA)."

Base's experience has shown him that this negative energy balance can be caused by any added stress, especially around freshening. Possible reasons for the problem, he says, include poor appetites, fresh cow diseases—DAs, metritis and lameness which can cause ketosis, as well as be the result of having ketosis—and over-conditioned dry cows.

Dr. Garrett Oetzel, an associate professor at the School of Veterinary Medicine at UW-Madison, has been involved with evaluating fresh cow programs for more than 15 years with the Food Animal Medicine Production group on campus. As a herd consultant for Midwest dairy herds, Dr. Oetzel says he has seen a slight increase in summer metabolic diseases in dairy herds, but knows that continuous management is key.

"Metabolic problems need to be



To help manage ketosis, Dr. Oetzel's rule of thumb is to reduce grain and protein as milk production and feed intake drop during the summer while offering free-choice forage at a bunk.

considered year round, because fresh cow crashes can always be an issue," Oetzel says. "The best way to decrease ketosis during hot months is to decrease animal stress."

Dr. Oetzel adds that the solution

to minimizing summer stress is heat medication.

"An overheated cow will not produce to her full potential, but more importantly, she will not have stress."

See Ketosis on page 6

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76-100	300	501-600	1350
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126-150	550	750-800	1550
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Ketosis

Continued from page 5
an appetite," he interjects.

To camouflage high temperatures and maintain healthy appetites, the professor recommends high quality ventilation in all barns and holding pens by using fans, misters and open air flow.

To address an animal's lack of appetite—a primary cause for ketosis, Dr. Oetzel encourages producers to manage their feeding programs throughout the year by adjusting for decreased summer production.

"Lower production will happen in the summer no matter what," he states. "Efforts to fool Mother Nature by feeding more grain will backfire. The key is ventilation and to hold on as best you can.

"Manipulating the diet will lead to acidosis, lameness and hoof problems."

Dr. Oetzel notes that he has seen the aftermath of heavy grain feeding repeatedly through herd visits. He says he frequently

notices a surge of foot problems in September from feeding too much grain during July and August.

Although the prime feeding management system varies depending on each individual operation, Dr. Oetzel's rule of thumb is to reduce grain and protein as milk production and feed intake drop during the summer while offering free-choice forage at a bunk.

"When comparing your year's rations, try to keep the grain and protein proportional to the amount of forage being eaten," Dr. Oetzel recommends. "If cows are eating 80 percent of the forage they were eating in the winter, feed them 80 percent of the grains and proteins.

"Don't be afraid to play it safe during the summer, more fiber is never a problem."

With proper transitioning of fresh cows a major player in ketosis prevention, Dr. Oetzel urges producers with component-fed herds to not feed high levels of grain right away. Noting that

feeding high grain levels right away can be "disastrous," he advises keeping fresh cows in separate groups to feed lower levels of grain.

Dr. Oetzel stresses that ration formulating is useless, however, if each cow is unable to consume the proper nutrients.

The No. 1 factor for lessened consumption, Dr. Oetzel observes, is bunk space in freestalls.

"Make sure to have at least 30 inches per cow at the bunk so that all cows can eat," he explains.

"Keep fresh cows in separate groups for three weeks prior to calving and for three weeks after.

"This time is crucial because so much metabolic activity occurs. So make sure that all cows can eat at the same time."

Nevertheless, this dairy consultant is quick to point out that, even with correct management, the best herds will have occasional ketosis flares. The best way to avoid the disease, he explains, is to watch for cows that are off feed as depressed

appetites are one of the first signs that something is wrong.

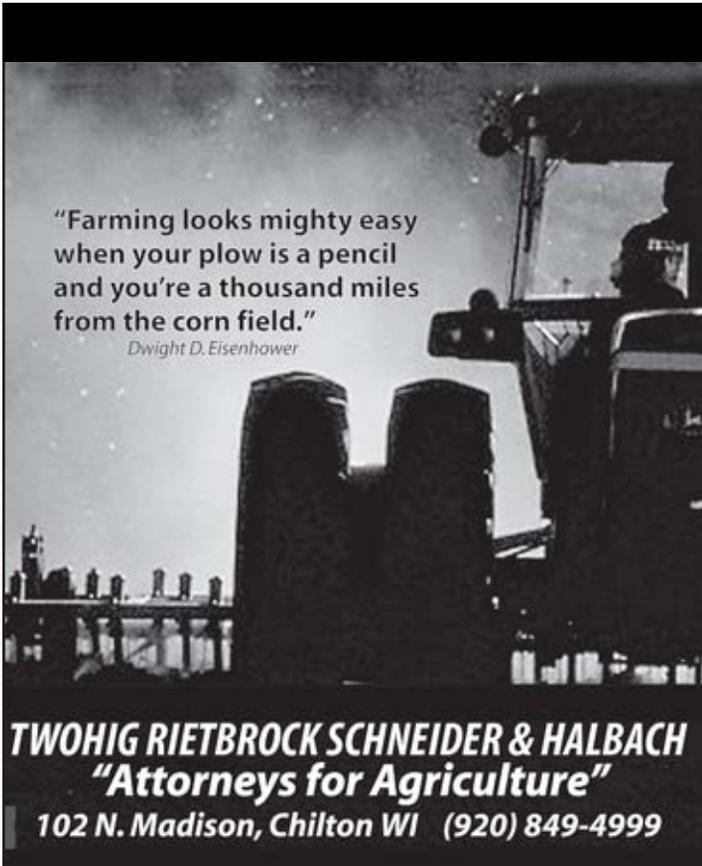
A simple calcite test will determine if the cow has early development of ketosis.

Dr. Oetzel recommends oral glycerol—a simple oral daily drench—for mild cases and intravenous glucose for severe cases. He urges producers to work with their local veterinarians to develop the best treatment protocol for their herds.

Overall, Dr. Oetzel's work with dairy cattle has shown that prevention is much more important than the treatment of fresh cow problems.

"The two big points to consider are feeding management and summer ventilation," he concludes. "Decreasing stress and keeping a balance between forage and grain are the best ways to keep cows healthy during the summer, but good management is needed year-round."

By Jeffrey Hoffelt



"Farming looks mighty easy
when your plow is a pencil
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Getting Cows to Breed Back Quickly

Timing is everything—especially when it comes to getting cows bred.

“You really can’t cut corners or cut too many costs with regard to reproduction because, if you let reproduction slide, there is a tremendous impact on future milk production,” advises Dr. Paul M. Fricke, UW-Madison professor of dairy science and dairy cattle reproduction extension specialist.

Therefore, Dr. Fricke says dairy producers wanting to tighten the turn-around between calving and conception and maximize profitability should pay close attention to timing. Two key points Dr. Fricke has been making in his

conversations with producers are timing of artificial insemination relative to behavioral estrus and timing of artificial insemination relative to synchronized ovulation.

TIMING OF AI RELATIVE TO BEHAVIOR ESTRUS

Timed breeding used to follow the simple philosophy of the a.m./p.m. rule. If a cow showed standing heat in the morning, she would be serviced in the evening, approximately 12 hours later. However, to optimize conception, Dr. Fricke suggests inseminating at the first observation of heat.

“I’ve been trying to get people to move away from the a.m./



To tighten the gap between calving and conception, while maximizing profitability, producers should pay close attention to timing.

p.m. rule,” he states. “If you see a cow in estrus, you can breed the cow immediately. You don’t have to—or want to—wait.

you can wait a few hours. You certainly don’t have to follow the a.m./p.m. rule to receive

“Or, to be on the safe side,

See Timing on page 15

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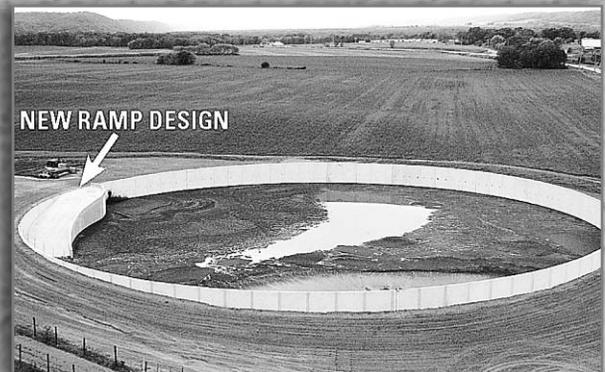
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2009 Fall PDPW Educational Calendar

Wisconsin Counties Association (ACE) Tour

September 15, LaCrosse

PDPW coordinates this educational tour for local elected officials and provides on-site education. The goal: To better familiarize participating officials with the workings of dairy operations.

Hispanic Milker Training

September 15, 16, 17: Arlington, Sheboygan Falls, Eau Claire

This valuable, practical training will be delivered entirely in Spanish. The three one-day training sessions will be conducted on actual dairies, with the program covering milking, important protocols and cow-handling techniques.

Wisconsin Towns Association (ACE) Tour

October 12, Stevens Point

PDPW has another exciting and informative dairy tour planned to better familiarize local elected officials with the workings of dairy operations in their townships.

Heifer Facility Tours

October 20-21, Two areas of Wisconsin

Facilities and how they work for the hosting dairies will be front

and center during two one-day tours. Not sure how to handle your heifers? Come and take a look at a variety of heifer-raising options that are available in Wisconsin. Find out what will work best for your operation!

Youth Leadership Derby

November 7-8, Milton High School, Milton

This dynamic program is geared to 15- to 18-year-olds looking to explore careers in the dairy industry. The Derby features six fun-filled, hands-on labs and three fabulous tours. A fun two-day lock-in!

Dairying Duo: Cows and People "Herdserson Training"

November 11-12

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Canadian Dairyman Finds Useful Information At PDPW Events

Although Brian Stoutjesdyk lives a long way from Wisconsin—some 1,300 miles—that doesn't stop him from being active in the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW).

Brian and his wife, Tracy, milk 160 registered Holsteins near Coaldale, Alberta, Canada. His 800-acre operation that raises corn, alfalfa and barley

Stoutjesdyk says his interest in PDPW was piqued after reading an article about the organization three years ago. The young dairyman's first involvement in PDPW was attending the PDPW-sponsored Manager's Academy in Phoenix, Ariz, in 2008. Impressed with the amount of useful information obtained at the '08 event, he attended the 2009 Manager's Academy in Orlando, Fla.



Brian Stoutjesdyk

the dairyman says that employee topics appeal to him.

He adds that sessions at the two Manager's Academy have helped him achieve better communication with his workers.

"I try to teach my employees how to solve problems before coming to me," he states.

Although there's no organization like PDPW in his part of Canada, Stoutjesdyk says he makes it a point to attend the Western Canadian Dairy Seminar each March in Red Deer, Alberta. He says the Western Canadian Dairy Seminar is useful but that it offers different information than what he gets at PDPW's Manager's Academy.

The Red Deer event is "high-level training, but it's still different than what Manager's Academy is," Stoutjesdyk compares. "The Red Deer seminar is more about livestock handling and nutrition and those kinds of things. Manager's Academy is more about human resources, managing people and decision making.

"I really like PDPW, and, after I've seen what's going on, I'll definitely go to more of the organization's events," Stoutjesdyk adds.

"I really like PDPW, and, after I've seen what's going on, I'll definitely go to more of the organization's events."

"Because I'm a manager, I wanted to learn more about the management end of the business," Stoutjesdyk says. "I learned that—and more."

In addition to being impressed with the caliber of speakers at Manager's Academy, Stoutjesdyk says he found the topics useful to him and his farm.

"I've applied all sorts of things—people skills, negotiating. I use the negotiating skills gained from the conference now when I'm buying equipment, and buying and selling cattle," Stoutjesdyk says.

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By Ron Johnson

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¹Hutjens, M. F. 2009. Feeding Challenges With Today's Milk Price. IL Dairy Day Report. p. 12-16.



A Cool Fat For A Hot Cow!

Moving Forward

When Dwight Eisenhower addressed the Republican National Committee in January 1958, he stated, "What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight—it's the size of the fight in the dog." This statement applies to today's dairy industry. It's not the size of the dairy; it's the size of the fight in the dairy producer. And by "fight," we're talking about the need to stay positive and support fellow agriculturists while we make it through these difficult times.

Over the last few months, I've been strategizing with dairy producers about ways to help them stay in business, pay their bills, and most importantly, position themselves to again become profitable in their dairy enterprise. Every dairy producer recognizes that survival is paramount, and, in this environment, simply being able to stay current on all operating bills

is a success.

It's understandable for dairy producers to be frustrated as they get more milk per cow than ever yet are struggling to pay the bills. Making ends meet has become a daunting task for everyone associated with the dairy business, considering milk prices are consistently \$2.50 to \$5 per hundredweight below most farms' cost of production. This inevitably means dairy producers must be willing to make changes to lower cost of production.

Changes could relate to ration formulation and feed sources. For example, I'm working with a dairy producer who made a feed change,



Gary Williams

and, over the past six months, has experienced a production increase from 76 pounds/cow/day to 99 pounds/cow/day on 300-400 cow dairy while still lowering his input costs.

Another change may include selling assets that are not paying their way. A question to ask yourself is "What assets do I have that I'm not getting a sufficient return to justify owning them?" This may include liquidating some non-essential equipment and, instead, renting or custom hiring. In some cases, it may even mean selling real estate, especially if that real estate is not essential to running your dairy business.

As you continue to analyze your business looking for opportunities to reduce expenses and lower your cost of production, I suggest that you look under every stone seeking creative, out-of-the-box ways to adapt and succeed.

The important thing to remember is that it IS possible to yield positive results – even in trying times. Several Dairy Herd Management publications featured a "Survival Checklist" that I'd like to share with you, with my comments added. The recommendations, which are quite simple, have the potential to make a large difference. For instance:

- Communicate with your creditors. Badgerland Financial and other dairy lenders have done a significant amount of loan servicing and extended additional operating money to aid dairy producers in 2009. While we'll continue to aid our producers to the best of our ability, please keep in mind that no one – from partners to lenders to vendors – like surprises. It's important to be proactive when communicating with your creditor.

- Intensify your book-keeping and records efforts. Be meticulous and have sufficient detail with your records, allowing you to know your cost of production, including variable cost of production and all-in cost of production (both fixed and variable costs). This will allow you to identify even small savings possibilities. Plus, quality records will aid management decisions and

provide answers for your partners, lenders and other vendors.

- Effectively include and communicate with employees. If you feel down, your employees will know. Thus, it's important to have honest dialogue with your staff. Try using a positive tone which will help them be receptive to your message. Ask for ideas they have to save money or increase productivity. Even consider rewarding those who come up with money-saving ideas. Overall, including employees builds morale and will result in a more productive and healthy work environment for all.

- Thank your customers, vendors and employees for their loyalty. Reach out to people and always continue networking. Share ideas and learn from each other. I believe this is more important now than ever before, especially during trying times.

- Always take care of yourself and your family. This is often forgotten in times like these, but taking care of yourself and your family is the most important. While stress is abundant in "good" times, stress during hardships can destroy people. It's important to schedule time off and spend time with your family. Go on a picnic, go to a zoo, a baseball game, overnight camping – whatever it takes to rejuvenate and remember what's important in life.

As you move forward in planning and executing your business plans, remember to have hope for a bright future and value the importance of positive thinking and embracing fellow agriculturists. Although we're experiencing these adverse conditions, dairy producers and industry professionals must unite and work together sharing both ideas and resources in order to overcome these difficult times. Agriculture is rooted deep in Wisconsin's heritage. Our state motto is "Forward" and that is what we need to do, continue moving forward with agriculture.

By Gary Williams,
Assistant VP &
Dairy Specialist,
Badgerland Financial



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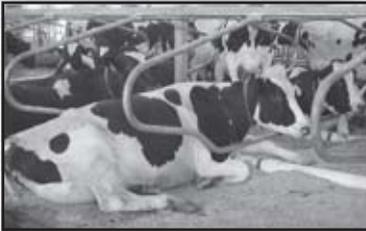
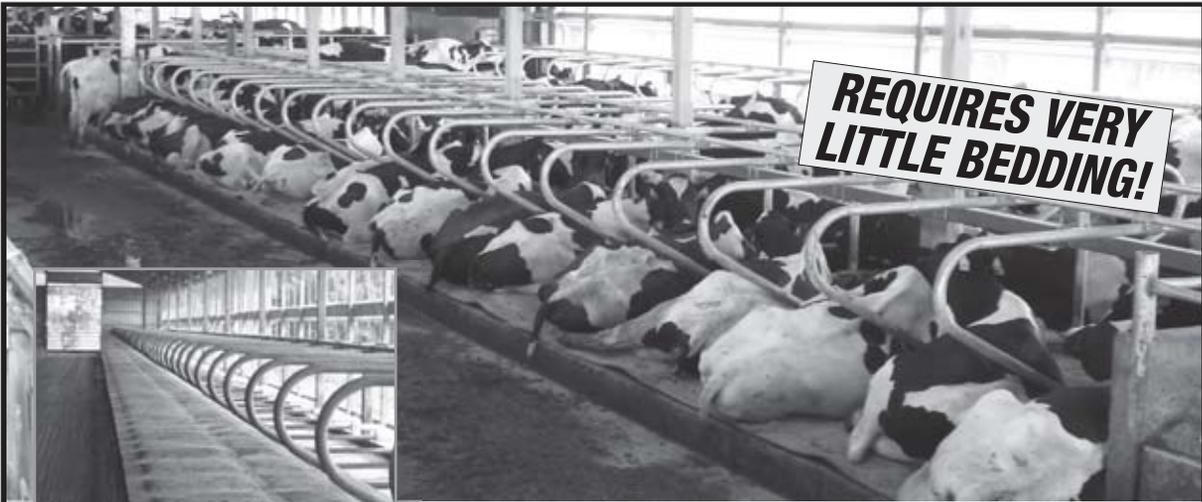
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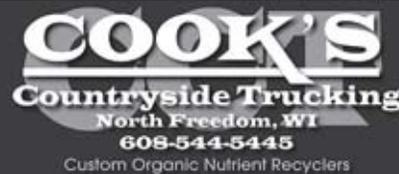
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Timing

Continued from page 7
good conception rates."

Dr. Fricke explains that the best indication of when a cow is going to ovulate is the first standing heat. Because it is difficult in most herds to detect the very first standing heat event of the estrus cycle, he advises breeding upon observation of heat.

TIMING OF AI RELATIVE TO SYNCHRONIZED OVULATION

"Be sure to breed your cows at the right time," Dr. Fricke warns. "You spend a lot of time and effort synchronizing the ovulations.

"Some producers are just choosing the wrong time to put semen into the cow, which doesn't match the biology."

The dairy repro specialist is a proponent of one particular synchronized AI program that he says can help optimize conception by better matching the timing of insemination to the timing of ovulation.

"An OvSynch 56 program is much better matched to the physiology," Dr. Fricke says. "You get much better fertility. That change itself can make a pretty big impact on a breeding program."

The principal of OvSynch 56 compared to the co-synch form of an Ovsynch protocol is a shorter interval between the gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) injections. For example, the first GnRH injection would be given on Monday morning, followed by

a prostaglandin injection seven days later on the next Monday morning. The second GnRH would be given 56 hours later on Wednesday afternoon, with the cow bred on Thursday, 12 to 16 hours later.

Dr. Fricke points out that trials that demonstrate shrinking the interval for GnRH injections from 14 days down to 10 to 12 days have yielded a 6 percentage-point increase in fertility. Though co-synch can offer the convenience of less cow handling because cows are bred at the same time the second GnRH dose is administered, Dr. Fricke maintains that better results can be achieved by taking the steps outlined by OvSynch 56.

A synchronized breeding program on the horizon is Double Ovsynch.

"Information is just starting to trickle in," Dr. Fricke says. The new program, he explained, is two Ovsynch protocols back-to-back. One of the anticipated benefits of the new program is improving the efficiency of breeding back anovulatory cows.

While it's tempting to adjust breeding programs to get cows bred back quicker, Dr. Fricke advises producers not to change breeding protocols in the heat of the summer or to change breeding programs if they have a relatively good reproduction program in place.

By Peggy Dierickx

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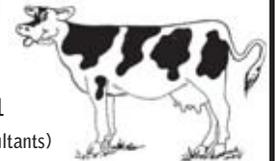
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