

Dairy's

BOTTOM LINE

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

Management Highly Structured at McArthur Farms



**Innovation embraced
at Larson Dairy, Inc.**

page 4



**Ways to save energy
costs, increase revenue.**

page 19



**Ration changes could
cost you.**

page 20

McArthur Farms consists of four 2,000-cow dairies, 1,500 acres of citrus and over 500 head of beef cattle on 9,000 acres in south central Florida. Of the 8,000 replacement heifers, half are raised on the farm and the other half by contract growers.

This family operation, which will be a tour stop during PDPW's Managers Academy, Jan. 20-22, was started by J.N. McArthur in 1929. A vo-ag instructor, he processed his own milk and delivered it door-to-door. By the mid 1950s the herd size was up to 5,000 Jerseys.

When the state of Florida enacted a nutrient management plan in 1990 to help control and reduce phosphorus run-off from dairies, McArthur Farms built two freestall dairies and two drylot dairies. At the same time, it replaced the remaining Jerseys with Holsteins to coincide with Florida's major fluid market.

Today, each dairy operates as individual profit/loss centers. They also have their own dairy managers, who oversee a maternity manager, heifer manager, calving manager, maintenance manager, and farm manager for crops and heavy equipment.

Each dairy manager is responsible for the costs of running their operation. They develop yearly budgets and receive monthly statements to monitor costs. Each dairy is compared to the composite of all the dairies.

John Gilliland is the vice president of the dairy operation for McArthur Farms and he oversees all four dairies.

"What we focus on is to always feed cows for highest production," Gilliland says of the farm's overall management strategy. "We don't feed a lot of

byproduct and instead feed for top production because you don't know when the milk price is going to be at its best."

Educating employees is another business strategy that's important at McArthur Farms. "The best way to make money is not to lose money. We teach them not to lose cattle," he says.

McArthur Farms employees 170 people in their total farming operations, with 150 of them at the dairies.

At the drylot dairies, cows are let out to pasture, but it is not considered a part of the ration. After being milked in a parlor, they are locked in a stanchion-type facility for breeding, sorting and other chores. From there they enter a feed barn where they receive a TMR.

See McArthur on page 6

Also In This Issue:

**Diversity eyed
page 5**

**Human resources workshop
page 12**

**Keeping a sound breeding program
page 27**

Find the Best Business Training at Managers Academy

Managers Academy is an MBA-level training that features two days of high-level executive training and one day of dynamic tours where you will hear from fellow CEOs and managers. Held, Jan. 20-22 in Orlando, Fla., this conference was specially designed for those who have a mind of a manager, heart of a leader and are up to a business challenge.

With an emphasis on upper-level business management, the Managers Academy offers the next step in business training specifically designed for top-shelf farm managers and other high-ranking industry professionals. The Managers Academy presents a level of business training never before obtained within agricultural circles, and it is a direct result of personal requests from our members. The program uses a hands-on, informational approach that is sure to challenge the best and brightest producers, CEOs and other management stakeholders within the dairy industry. If you are a dairy producer, a dairy processor, or manager in any other segment of our industry, this training is for you.

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instructor and management consultant who specializes in negotiation, conflict resolution, mediation, and diversity from BayGroup International.

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~Roger & Tamara Weiland, Weiland Dairy, Columbus, Wis.

"The Academy has forced me to look at our business and the future with more global thoughts of where we want to be."

~David Fisher, Mapleview Dairy, LLC, Madrid, N.Y.

PDPW Advisors

Debbie Crave
Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese
Waterloo
920-478-4887
debbie@cravecheese.com

Jeff Riechers
M&I Marshall & Ilsley Bank
Darlington
608-588-2526
jeffrey.riechers@micorp.com

Floyd Sutton
Zinpro Performance Materials
Freeport, Ill.
815-235-9169
fsutton@zinpro.com

Doug Wilson
CRI & Genex
Shawano
715-526-7510
rdwilson@crinet.com

PDPW Staff

Shelly Mayer
Executive Director
800-947-7379
smayer@pdpw.org

Julie Gabris
Member Resource Manager
800-947-7379
mail@pdpw.org

Kathy Muth
Program Manger
800-947-7379
kmuth@pdpw.org

Susan Orth
Communications Specialist
800-947-7379
sorth@pdpw.org

PDPW Board of Directors

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knoepke@nelson-tel.net

Secretary
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Janesville
608-754-1171
bbarlass@ticon.net

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Ladysmith
715-532-6516
ejhill@centurytel.net

Mark Diederichs
Malone
920-795-4266
mark@lakebreezedairy.com

Patty Endres
Lodi
608-592-7856
endres@mail.merr.com

Kevin Griswold
Ixonia
262-853-3907
taglane@wildblue.net

Gary Ruegsegger
Stratford
715-687-4054
garyrueg@hotmail.com

Russel Strutz
Two Rivers
920-755-4040
sfi@tm.net

Contact PDPW at:
N5776 US Hwy 151, Suite 1
Fond du Lac, WI 54937
800-947-7379
mail@pdpw.org
www.pdpw.org

Editorial
Karen Lee
608-250-4320
klee@madison.com

Advertising
Brenda Murphy
608-250-4157
bmurphy@madison.com

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Innovation Embraced at Larson Dairy, Inc.

Larson Dairy, Inc., is a three generation dairy farm in Okeechobee County, Fla. Founder and President Red Larson is still very involved in the farm he started in 1947 after serving as a pilot in World War II.

The dairy has been located near Fort Lauderdale and Miami went from 100 cows to 10,000 cows. Today it spans 10,000 acres in the Okeechobee, Fla., area with over 5,000 head of milking cows at three farms. One of those farms will be a tour stop for PDPW's Managers Academy Jan. 20-22.

The dairy operation includes Red's two sons, who each have farms of their own, and a pair of

grandsons who operate two of the corporation's farms.

Two of the three dairies have a double-32 rapid exit parlor and one uses a double-34 parabone. Cows are kept in confinement housing.

The heifer operation is connected with the dairies. Heifers are raised for herd replacements and bull calves are raised to 300 to 400 pounds and sold to feedlots.

Larson Dairy employs around 90 people with roughly 30 at each site.

Most of the grain fed on the farms is purchased and railed in. Corn silage is grown in the "glades" about 30 miles south of the farms, reports Red's grandson Jacob who manages one of the dairies. Larson Dairy contracts the variety grown and dictates cropping and harvesting methods. When the harvested crop arrives at the



Red Larson



Misters keep cows cool at one of the Larson Dairy, Inc. farms in Okeechobee County, Fla.

dairies they take care of storage in bunkers.

Haylage is produced from star grass and Hermathia. They chop every 30 to 35 days and can harvest four to seven cuttings a year. This is stored in bags. The dairies also make a lot of dry hay.

The typical TMR mix includes corn silage; haylage; dry hay; a grain mix – which could contain corn, citrus pulp, corn gluten meal; cottonseed or distillers grain; soybean meal; a mineral pack; water and molasses.

Red was one of the first to install a lagoon system to control wastewater to meet the environmental compliance required in the Okeechobee Lake basin. This efficient system relies on gravity flow with a simple cleansing system, which cycles sand through in less than 24 hours.

Manure flows through three lagoons. The first one captures solids, the second has some of both and the third is for liquids. The liquids are recycled for flushing the freestalls and irrigation through central pivots.

"We try to reuse as much as we can and recapture as much of the nutrient value," Jacob

says.

The Larsons are currently exploring ways to harvest or mine the solids for reuse as well.

Finding new innovations and solutions isn't new for Larson Dairy. Red has always been one to make changes when he saw the need. He's changed the dairy from flat barns to parlors, made strides in feeding strategies, implemented A.I. to improve genetics, and so on. "Over 60 years we've progressed little by little," he says.

Through it all, Red says the key is to remain consistent. "To continue doing what we know how to do best. Through the good times and bad times, we adjust as time comes and goes."

Perhaps the biggest adjustment was following the summer of 2004 when the dairies were hit hard by four hurricanes. The area had been evacuated by many, but the Larsons and their employees stayed to care for the cows. Two barns were destroyed, the main power supply was gone and some cattle were lost, but through it all they stuck with what they knew how to do - produce milk.

By Karen Lee

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Williamson Cattle Company Depends on Diversity

Cattle, citrus and catfish are the entities that compose the Williamson Cattle Company in Florida and Alabama. This ranch will be a tour stop for PDPW's Managers Academy, Jan. 20-22.

The company was founded in the late 1940s by Frank Williamson. It is where his son, Frank "Sonny" Williamson Jr., and grandson, Frank "Wes" Williamson III, have made their careers. Today, the fourth generation is also taking on an active role in the farm.

Their ranch is home to 10,000 head of Brangus cattle. This cow-calf operation thrives with the Brangus breed because it combines the superior Angus genetics for mothering and meat with the Brahman's ability to withstand the sub-tropical environment in Florida.

Calves are weaned at 10 months of age, weighing 500 to 600 pounds. The bull calves are sold as steers by the semi-load to feedlots in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa.

The Williamsons keep a large portion of the heifer calves for replacements in their own operation.

"Fortunately in south Florida we can grow grass almost year-round," Wes says, noting for just three months a year they need to provide supplemental feed.

The ranch in Alabama has a four-month span when additional feed is required.

In addition to the cattle, they have 8,000 acres in citrus groves, with red and white grapefruit, which are sold for the fresh export market, and oranges that are made into orange juice.

Two different diseases – citrus canker and citrus greening – are threatening the entire Florida citrus industry. "Those two diseases are really playing havoc," Wes says. "They



could put Florida out of business."

For the Williamsons, citrus greening is of greater concern. This disease is carried by one particular insect from one tree to the next and by the time symptoms are recognized the tree is too far gone to be saved. The University of Florida and U.S. Department of Agriculture have done a lot of research and spent a tremendous amount of money in an attempt to find and remove the insect or in removing the infected trees.

Their commercial catfish and some cattle are raised in western Alabama. There they have 1,500 acres underwater in ponds for the fish. They stock the ponds twice a year with the majority done in the winter. They raise 10,000 fish per acre and feed each fish about two pounds of feed in a year's time when they have reached a weight of 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 pounds.

When ready, they drag a net through the ponds to catch the large fish. A fish that isn't big enough can swim through the holes and stay in the pond until its ready. They are then dipped in a live haul truck to several processors in Alabama and some in the Mississippi Delta region.

The Williamson Cattle Company relies on 17 employees in Alabama and 23 employees in Florida to get the

job done.

Each entity functions as a separate business enterprise, yet contribute to the company as a whole.

Being diversified is very helpful, Wes says. Very seldom

See Williamson on page 8

"I like all of the PDPW events.

It usually refreshes my work ethic.

It helps keep me motivated."

*-Patricia A. Krueger Dolph,
Dolph Dairy, Lake Mills*

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McArthur

Continued from page 1

In the pasture there is additional access to TMR or forage.

These dairies, as well as the dry cow and heifer farms, have cooling ponds to keep the cattle comfortable.

The two freestall dairies were struck by four hurricanes in nine weeks in 2004. Two of those hurricanes went directly over the farms causing major roof damage to the barns. With help from the Department of Agriculture in providing cost-sharing, McArthur Farms replaced the damaged freestall barns with four new tunnel-ventilated barns. Each tunnel barn holds 400 cows and priority is given to fresh and high-producing cows.

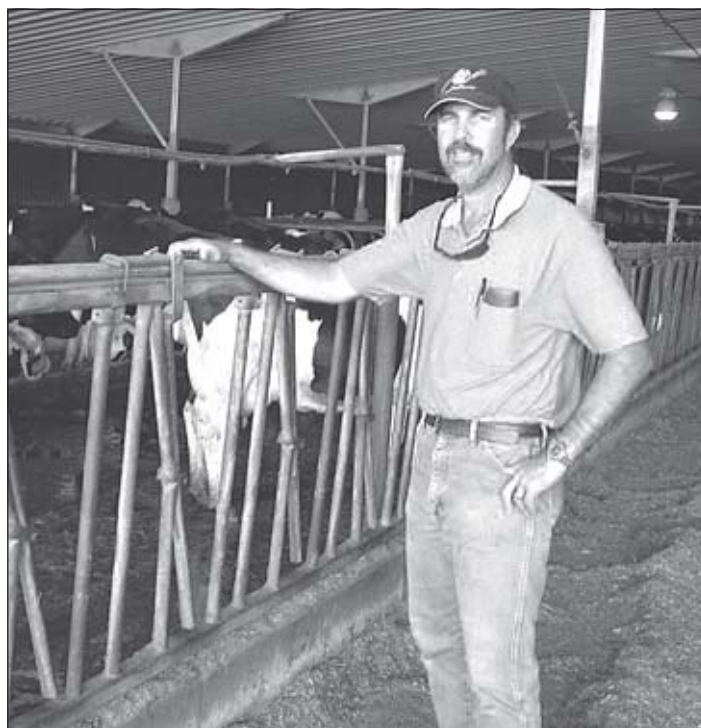
The barns are flushed with wastewater and solids get separated and sold as compost. The remaining liquid

is stored in holding ponds and distributed using center pivot irrigation. From the fields it flows into a retention pond where the phosphorus settles out. Lagoons encompass 1,000 acres of their farm.

McArthur Farms grows Bermuda grass and Hermathia on 3,000 acres for forage. It is custom harvested and stored in silage bags. Corn silage was purchased last year from contract growers.

Now, they are converting some of their citrus land for growing corn for silage. When the hurricanes in 2004 destroyed the barns, they also introduced citrus canker, a contagious disease, to Florida. To help eliminate the spread of the disease, the government offered to pay farmers to destroy their citrus trees.

By Karen Lee



John Gilliland, vice president of the dairy operation for McArthur Farms, is pictured in one of the barns that were renovated after a hurricane in 2004.

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Williamson

Continued from page 5

are all three commodities down. Yet, on the flip side, very seldom are all three commodities up. Nonetheless, having all three entities helps to even out cash flow for Williamson Cattle Company.

Just like in every business today, feed, fuel and fertilizer are adversely affecting all three of the entities, Wes reports.

Fuel prices have drastically affected the cattle business. In terms of freight expense, it used to cost seven to eight cents less per pound to raise a calf in Florida than to send it west. Now that figure is 14 to 15 cents a pound.

However, Wes says, it is still cheaper to send the calf to the feed than to raise them in Florida because they gain much better in the dry climate.

For the catfish entity, feed is the driving cost. The predominate feed is soybean meal which increased from

\$252 per ton to over \$400 per ton. This increase in grain price has meant a \$2.25 million additional expense in one year.

What allows the Williamsons to remain profitable in times like these is that they know what it costs to be successful.

"First and foremost you have to know your cost of production down to every penny," Wes says. "When you know that you can make your projections by knowing your breakeven costs."

He adds that they have never been a company that has been heavily leveraged. Therefore they have less risk and less debt to service.

Wes also says he firmly believes in diversification. A vertically integrated farm is still dependent on the price received. By being horizontally diversified it can lessen the overall affect of a single cost.

By Karen Lee

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2008-2009 PDPW Education Calendar

Dairy Connect
November 5

Foremost Farms USA, Baraboo
A challenging one-day training focusing on communication skills and industry issues to effectively inform communities about agriculture.

Youth Leadership Derby
November 8-9

Brillion High School, Brillion
A weekend lock-in for ages 15-18 with hands-on labs, one-of-a-kind tours, career exploration and interactive leadership workshops.

Production Management Symposium
November 18, 19 & 20

This conference is designed for herd owners and managers, and it will highlight nutrition, reproduction and forage innovations that yield more milk for dollars invested.

Calf Care Workshop for Hispanic Employees
December 2 & 3

UW-River Falls Dairy Learning Center & Endres Jazy Jerseys, Lodi
A hands-on, one-day workshop, focusing on raising calves. This training will be taught solely in Spanish.

Turnkey Human Resource Workshop
December 9-10

Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells
This high-level human resources training will cover valuable documents needed in employee management, including policy and employee handbooks, standard operating procedures and paperwork needed when hiring and firing.

Commodity Marketing Informational Class
December 11

WMMB, Madison

This is the orientation session of this 6-class, year-long course, which focuses on marketing tools and principles required for successful commodity marketing

Managers Academy
January 20-22, 2009

Orlando, Florida
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Milker Training for Hispanic Employees
February 4 & 5, 2009

This one-day, hands-on training will teach milking protocols and cow handling. This training will be taught solely in Spanish.

Agriculture Community Engagement (ACE) Regional Meeting
February 19, 2009

Holiday Inn, Fond du Lac
A one-day meeting for dairy producers, local elected officials,

industry leaders and community members to address and learn more about issues and changes surrounding the dairy industry.

Annual Business Conference
March 17-18, 2009

Alliant Energy Center, Madison
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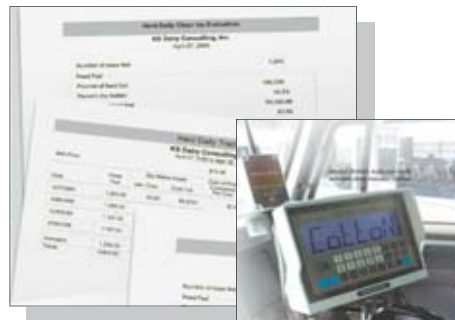
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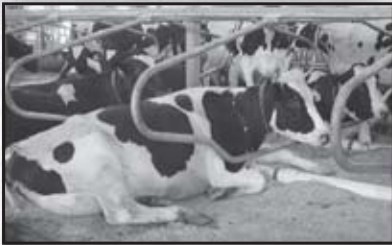


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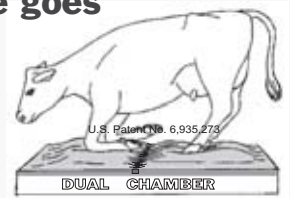
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—Mitch Breunig, Mystic Valley Dairy, LLC, Sauk City

Take Home the Resources You Need at Turn-Key Human Resource Workshop

Whether you have 1 or 101 employees, this training is for you! The Turn-Key Human Resource Workshop will be held Dec. 9-10 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells, with the option to attend one or both days.

Learn from the experts with firsthand experience as you discover effective interview techniques, start your very own employee handbook, tips and tricks of employee management and other insight that will make your dairy become more efficient and profitable.

The first day, Dec. 9, will feature nationally-recognized human resource expert, veterinarian and owner of DairyWorks, Tom Fuhrmann. Fuhrmann will share his expertise and help you

jumpstart or improve your existing employee handbook. He'll also walk you through the steps to develop standard operating procedures and put them onto paper. Agricultural attorney George Twohig will arm you with information you need to do the unpopular task of firing an employee.

Day two of the Turn-Key Human Resource Workshop includes an engaging session that will teach you “what to ask” and “what NOT to ask” as you interview applicants. Leading this session is Melinda Mullenix, the Human Resource Service Manager with AgCareers.com. Sandy Vande Zande, a senior accountant, will guide you through the sea of applications, forms, reports, rules and regulations. She'll provide you

examples of everything that the employee and you, the employer, should have completed (and done correctly).

A unparalleled producer panel will provide you with advice you can't find anywhere else. The panelists include: Doug Block from Hunter Haven Farms, Inc. in Pearl City, Ill.; Liz Doornink from Jon-De Farm, Inc. in Baldwin; and Hank Wagner from Wagner Farms in Oconto Falls.

No matter the size of your staff or your dairy, the Turn-Key Human Resource Workshop will arm you with the skills and knowledge to implement and improve the human resource management on your dairy. To learn more and to register, visit www.pdpw.org or call 800-847-7379.

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Alligators Abound at Calcaterra Farm

When Paul Calcaterra Sr. had a hard time finding hides at a consistent price to supply his El Paso, Texas, boot factory, he decided to cut out the middleman and purchase a farm.

It wasn't cattle hides he was looking for, but rather those from alligators to use in manufacturing the company's large line of exquisite Italian leather boots and the popular Cowtown cowboy boots and western boots.

The boot factory has been in the family for 38 years and the Calcaterra Alligator Farm in south central Florida was acquired eight years ago.

Paul Calcaterra Jr. is an owner and manager of the alligator operation in Okeechobee, Fla., which will be a tour stop for PDPW's Managers Academy Jan. 20-22. He oversees everything from the collection of eggs to feeding and finally processing at the on-farm facility.

The alligator eggs are collected from privately and publicly owned bodies of water. They fly over the nearby land with a low-flying helicopter to locate the alligator nests. Some come from nearby ranches and one local dairy farm, McArthur Dairy, Inc. (also featured in this issue of Dairy's Bottom Line), where the alligators live in the lagoons and nest in the fields.

In addition to collecting eggs, Calcaterra Alligator Farm is the largest breeding facility in the nation. It houses over 250 alligators for breeding. At 7 years old an alligator will begin to lay eggs and will produce about 35 at a time.

The farm is arranged in a series of buildings to accommodate various growth stages. Eggs are placed in a 90-degree hatchery where they hatch from mid-August to mid-September. The Calcaterras hatch 10,000 to 12,000 alligators in approximately one month's time each year.

The baby alligators use a tooth to help them break out from their eggs. However, Paul Jr.'s two young daughters help those that struggle. They walk through the hatchery chirping at the eggs. If the alligator chirps back they bop the egg and release the 6-8-inch long baby alligators.

As the alligators grow, they are moved throughout the facility based on size. The barns are dark to accommodate the creatures' nocturnal life-style. Each pen also has access to ponds built with cement.

Paul Jr. spends time each day washing the alligators. The wash water flows into a retention pond and then dissipates into the ground.

See Calcaterra on page 14

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Calling all Teens, Ages 15-18 Seats Still Available For the Youth Leadership Derby

Fuel up and start your engines for the PDPW Youth Leadership Derby, Nov. 8-9 at the Brillion High School. The two-day lock-in event, designed for teens ages 15-18, is chucked full of hands-on labs, unique tours, interactive workshops and the experience of a lifetime for young dairy leaders.

Coming into turn one, you won't believe what you'll experience on the three one-of-a-kind tours or during one of the hands-on calf, food science and reproduction labs!

Coming out of turn two, you'll navigate your way through high-speed interactive workshops that will send you

into a solid life-long position. Zooming down the straightaway, you'll see your future and the many opportunities available as you cross the finish line with a new plan and skills to last a lifetime!

Along with these valuable training sessions and learning labs, the Youth Leadership Derby is packed with networking opportunities and fun, fast-moving activities. All students ages 15-18 are welcome. Dairy experience is not necessary.

To register or receive additional information, visit www.pdpw.org or call 800-947-7379.

Face of the Future



Photo by Brianna Ditzenberger

PDPW would like to welcome Evan Schnadt, a senior at UW-Madison, as its intern through the school year. Evan grew up on a dairy farm in northeastern Iowa and has been involved in agriculture his whole life. His family only cash crops on the home farm now, but his passion for the dairy industry stays with him. He is currently completing his dairy science major at UW-Madison and is very active on campus. Evan is a member of Badger Dairy Club, National Agri-Marketing Association, the dairy judging team, as well as a CALS ambassador. "I'm looking forward to meeting a lot of new people, networking, and the opportunity to gain valuable skills," Evan says about his internship opportunity. His duties will include working closely with PDPW's mentor program, which pairs college students with a dairy producer mentor. Another aspect of his experience will be his involvement with the internship program where he will work to increase opportunities for students who would like to explore a career in dairy production.

Calcaterra

Continued from page 13

A protein pellet, mainly derived from fishmeal is fed to the alligators until they reach the age of 18-24 months. By that time they've grown to 4 1/2 to 5 feet long and are ready for slaughter.

Since alligators have a very low mortality rate, the Calcaterras slaughter almost as many as are hatched each year. This is done in their on-farm processing facility. Approximately 1,500 ponds of alligator meat is processed a week. It is sold to restaurants and grocery stores. Hides are sent to a tannery in Sebring, Fla., and then delivered to the boot factory in Texas.

Paul, Jr. enjoys his new-found career in alligator farming as it has three to four months with a lighter workload that allows time for hunting – a passion of his.

The Calcaterra Alligator Farm is perhaps the only alligator farm in Florida that utilizes the majority of the animals. Most farms in the state are there for recreation and tourism or meat processing.

Diversity is the key to their business success, Paul Jr. says. They also have a significant market for their product, attracting buyers from not only the United States, but foreign markets as well.

By Karen Lee

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~David Geiser and Deb Reinhart, Gold Star Farms, New Holstein

Feed, Reproduction, Management Will Be Featured at the Production Management Symposium

If you manage cows, the Production Management Symposium is a must-attend educational conference. Learn even more as you hear directly from the Dr. Mike Hutjens, Dr. Paul Fricke, Neal Verfuert and many other experts.

Held Nov. 18, 19 & 20 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, each day of the Production Management Symposium will have a special focus. The first day, Nov. 18, will cover feed and feeding efficiencies; Day 2, Nov. 19, will feature reproductive success and getting cows pregnant faster; and Day 3 will showcase management, energy and technologies. Single day and

three-day conference rates are available.

On the first day, which focuses on feed, Dr. Mike Hutjens, dairy specialist at the University of Illinois and recently named World Dairy Expo Industry Person of the Year, will share the latest information to get the most from your investment when feeding high producing cows, while maintaining herd health.

On Nov. 19, the second day of the conference, the lead speaker will be Dr. Paul Fricke, a UW-Madison dairy science associate professor and reproduction specialist. He'll lead off the day with cutting edge and practical tips for getting cows pregnant. From physiology to heat

management tools, Dr. Fricke will help you decrease days open and maximize your herd's potential.

Dr. John Fetrow, professor of dairy production medicine at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota, will be the highlight on the third day of this one-of-a-kind conference when he will challenge you to make decisions that produce positive results during volatile times.

You'll take home valuable knowledge and understanding that you can implement on your dairy for increased profitability. To learn about the complete line-up of experts, visit www.pdpw.org or call 800-947-7379.

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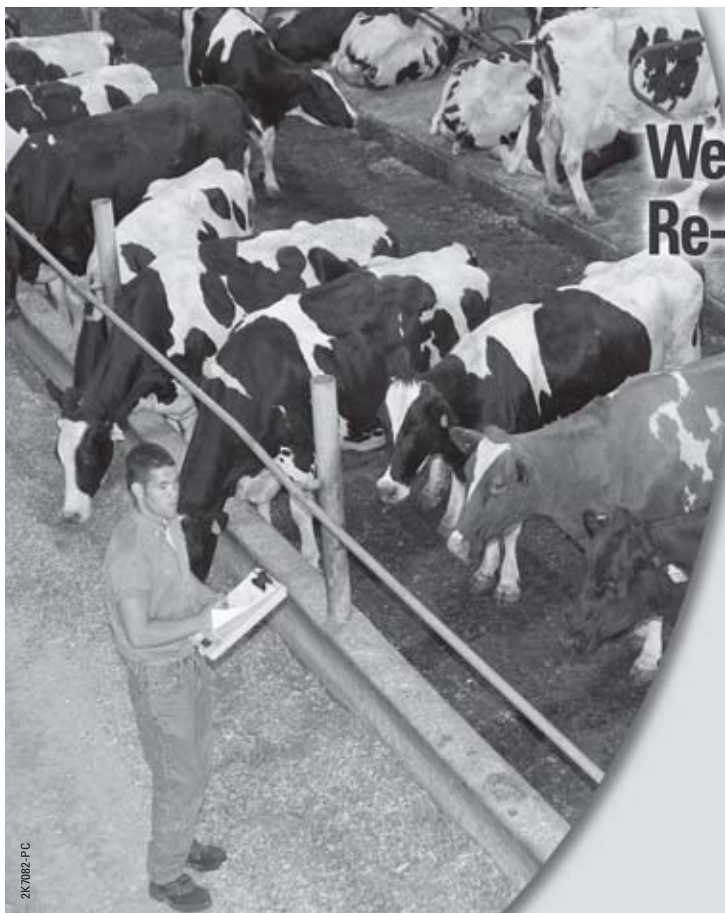
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Production management Symposium

DAY 1 November 18

Feed & feeding efficiency

9:30 a.m. - Session begins

6:00 p.m. - Banquet

DAY 2 November 19

*Getting cows
pregnant faster*

8:30 a.m. - Session begins

6:00 p.m. - Banquet

DAY 3 November 20

*Management, energy
and technologies*

8:30 a.m. - Session begins

3:00 p.m. - Conclusion

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Dr. Mike Hutjens



Dr. Mike Hutjens, dairy specialist at the University of Illinois, tackles the feed efficiency monster by breaking the topic into palatable bites. He will share the latest information to get the most from your investment when feeding high producing cows, while maintaining herd health. Hutjens' knowledge, humor and ability to communicate complicated topics as practical concepts will help you gather a healthy serving of profit tips.

Dr. Normand St-Pierre, Ohio State dairy specialist, shares numerous strategies, including feed selection, ration balancing, feed management and crops planning. St-Pierre explains the value of various feedstuffs, feeding options and how to calculate the most cost-effective ration.

Shrink reduction and silage technology is top-of-mind for **Dr. Keith Bolsen**, bovine nutrition professor emeritus from Kansas State. Internationally known for his common sense approach to storage management and safety, Bolsen focuses on what we can control in bunker and bag management.

Tom Nauman, dairy nutritionist and consultant, shares insight into precision feeding and balancing dairy and environmental needs. Leaning on his experience from Pennsylvania, where phosphorus in the Chesapeake Bay resulted in his research on this topic, Nauman sheds new light on harmonizing feeding your bottom line and caring for the environment.

Dr. Paul Fricke



Dr. Paul Fricke, UW-Madison dairy science associate professor and reproduction specialist, leads off the day with cutting edge and practical tips for getting cows pregnant. From physiology to heat management tools, Dr. Fricke will help you decrease days open and maximize your herd's potential. **Dr. Fred Moreira**, a Pfizer Animal Health veterinarian with a Ph.D. in reproduction, shares what's new and what we have learned about reproductive tools and effectiveness.

Get the inside scoop on genomics, how this technology may change our industry and what you need to know in order to utilize this new tool.

Hear directly from industry experts, **Dr. Mike Cowan** from Accelerated Genetics and **Dr. Kent Weigel**, associate professor and dairy genetics specialist at the UW-Madison. In January 2009, USDA sire summaries will contain genomic information.

Gunnar Josefsson, dairy specialist and director of research at Orion AG Lighting, shares how light can impact production potential of replacement heifers, dry cows and your milking string. Gain insight into how dry cows and your herd react to seasonal and lighting changes.

Dairy panel shares what works for them. Dairy producers and a reproductive consultant share what they've tried and what works in their operation. **Dr. Don Niles** from Dairy Dreams LLC in Kewaunee, WI and **Rick Schwenck** from Lake Breeze Dairy in Malone, WI provide their advice and experience of what works for their herds. **Levi Bratt**, reproductive consultant with Alta Genetics, gives his experience and view on what he sees that works and fails on farms. Prior to joining Alta, Bratt worked with Shiloh Dairy LLC in Brillion, WI.

Dr. John Fetrow



Dr. John Fetrow, professor of dairy production medicine at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota, challenges managers to make decisions that produce positive results during volatile times. This morning of dynamic business training focuses on utilizing financial benchmarks and facts to make sound management moves. Tying together input costs, herd health, output capacity and other management situations, this workshop is a must-attend for dairy producers in today's economy.

Providing you a new tool, **Brian Gould** and **Dr. Victor Cabrera** from the University of Wisconsin-Madison will train us on the newly created Livestock

Gross Margin Insurance for Dairy (LGM-Dairy). They will explain the structure of the insurance and show us how to employ this new tool. They will compare the cost of LGM-Dairy to alternative strategies. You'll go home ready to use online tools to evaluate the benefits of LGM-Dairy for your business.

All about energy and more... **Neal Verfuert**, President and CEO, Orion Energy Systems, shares what other industry sectors are doing that can also save dairy producers money with reduced energy costs. He will peak your interests on topics including carbon credits, curbing electric and energy costs. This presentation will include a "technology walk" featuring what we can utilize in the dairy technology. Beam ahead to the next wave of electronic innovation and energy savings with this intriguing, high-tech presentation and demonstration.

Ration Changes Could Be Penny Wise, Pound Foolish

It's tempting, during times like these, to try to tweak your dairy cows' rations. After all, who doesn't want to save money when input costs are up and milk prices are expected to keep slipping?

But beware. Trimming ration costs could lead to costly mistakes. Maybe Ben Franklin was thinking about herd management when he cautioned against being "penny wise and pound foolish."

Mike Hutjens, a University of Illinois Extension dairy specialist concurs. He says, "While 'cheaper' feeding programs can be a plus, making correct decisions will be important."

Hutjens has what he calls "three golden rules" that

should be adhered to when ration changes are being considered.

DON'T SACRIFICE MILK

His first rule reflects this old adage: Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.

In Hutjens' words, the rule is, "Never give up milk yield, as income will be reduced faster than expenses." After all, it's a cow's milk production that pays her way and provides profits.

Hutjens explains, "At today's feed prices, one pound of ration dry matter may cost nine to 11 cents. One pound of dry matter can support 2 to 2.5 pounds more milk for Holstein cows, above their maintenance needs. Not feeding one pound



Photo by Ron Johnson

Tweaking a dairy ration to save on feed expenses may not be cost effective in the end.

of dry matter results in 10 cents savings while losing 36 to 40 cents of milk income."

So don't try to save a dime while losing 40 cents.

KEEP COMPONENTS UP

While dairy producers will want to keep milk production strong, they need to remember the milk components, too. So this is the dairy specialist's second "golden rule": "Maintain milk components."

Hutjens notes that milk protein was recently worth 3.27 cents a pound. Butterfat was recently valued at 1.82 cents a pound.

If ration changes are made, and if the butterfat and protein tests drop, reexamine those ration changes. "Low components can reflect incorrect changes in a feeding program or impaired rumen function," Hutjens reminds.

VIEW BIG PICTURE

Another thing to keep in mind, according to Hutjens, is what ration changes might do

down the road a ways. That leads to his third "golden rule": "Guard against feed changes that affect the dairy herd long term."

Trying to save a few pennies now can cost dollars later. Money can be lost because of poor herd fertility, heifers that grow slower, and more herd health problems in general.

"While milk response can be corrected over several weeks, getting cows pregnant and reducing somatic cell counts can take months to improve," Hutjens warns.

DON'T DO THIS

In addition to his trio of "golden rules," Hutjens has a list of five things to definitely not do when it comes to fine tuning rations.

First, don't skimp on fat and oil.

"Pulling out roasted soybeans, fuzzy cottonseed, or inert fats may not result in lost milk production for several

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See Ration on page 21

Ration

Continued from page 20

weeks," he acknowledges. "But after four to six months, body condition score can drop, which may not be a problem until the next lactation, when conception and fertility drops or cows cannot maintain peak milk production."

Second, don't ignore changes in your cows after altering the ration.

Hutjens says, "Cows 'talk to us' every day, including milk urea nitrogen (MUN), fecal scores, body condition scores, dry matter intake, and milk performance. If you make a feeding change and the cow response is negative, it was a bad decision."

Third, don't give your heifers short shrift.

"Pulling minerals, grain, and protein from the growing-heifer ration may seem minor, but long-term health, growth, and

reproduction problems can result, leading to older heifers and lower milk yield. Heifers represent a major future of your herd," Hutjens reminds. "Do not slow the growth of these future herd replacements."

Fourth, don't stop balancing rations.

Hutjens advises, "Ration balancing using a rumen model program is a must in most high-producing herds, to achieve optimal levels of metabolizable protein, meet a three-to-one ratio of lysine to methionine with 6.6 percent lysine and 2.2 percent methionine of essential amino acids available in the small intestine, and adjust energy levels based on feed intake and feed ingredients," the dairy specialist explains. "Use a program that you find user friendly and provides the output you want."

Fifth, don't try to save money by no longer hiring a nutritionist. That, warns Hutjens, can be a "big mistake."

He says, "While the consultant cost can be \$3 to \$5 a cow per month, the risk in lost milk performance, strategic feed purchases, feed bunk reading, independent cow body condition scores, and a fresh set of eyes can be 'priceless.' Your nutritionist is part of your management team that impacts 50 percent of the cost to produce milk on your farm."

To summarize, Hutjens reminds that a dairy farm business is a "long-term commitment." So "do not make short-term feeding errors."

Hutjens will share more feeding tips at PDPW's Production Management Symposium, Nov. 18-20 in Appleton.

By Ron Johnson

"One of the greatest things in the dairy industry is the people that you get to work with. Through PDPW, we've met so many people, been able to network with so many different people and learned so many different things."

~Steve Smits, Double S Dairy, Markesan



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PDPW: An Organization For Dairy Producers Like You

WHAT IS PDPW?

Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW) is the largest producer-led dairy organization in the nation. PDPW has grown from our humble beginnings in 1992 when a small group of dairy producers saw a need for education and information that would help Wisconsin producers improve profitability. Today we are a network with thousands of dairy businesses from throughout the nation who have the same passion for the future of the dairy industry. That passion helps us lead the success of the dairy industry through education.

WHO IS PDPW?

PDPW membership represents the gamut of dairy producers. Every type of dairy producer and every size operation is represented and welcomed in our membership. This breadth of our members is represented by the attendees at the PDPW Annual Business Conference, dairy's premier event. PDPW began as a Wisconsin-only organization. Today we have grown to a network of thousands of producers and industry leaders covering the country. In fact, we have producer members from fifteen states, representing dairies from coast-to-coast. These producers from across the nation seek business programming and resources only found at PDPW. We offer a wide variety of educational programming designed to meet your specific needs and present new, innovative information that is useful to you. One idea, solution and approach doesn't work for everyone – each is unique. We are dairy producers – just like you.

Different operations, unique businesses, one vision: to lead the success of the dairy industry. No matter the type of your dairy or the size of your herd, PDPW embraces the entire industry and lives its mission "to share ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed."

PDPW is all about connections. Connecting you with:

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New Ways to View Energy on Farms: Save Cost...and Increase Revenues

Dairy producers are always looking for opportunities to manage their herds more efficiently. Why not approach energy the same way?

Instead of simply paying the bill and then grumbling about it, the most progressive producers are beginning to think about energy use on the dairy no differently than how they approach their most important asset - their cows. In fact, they're looking beyond energy efficiency and immediate cost savings to whole-farm opportunities to boost profitability.

They're even starting to explore the idea of eventually turning their operational energy efficiency into additional income in the form of carbon credit sales.

Orion Energy Systems helps producers take a "systems" approach to energy use on farms, says Mike Ontrop, director of agricultural development.

Working out of Ohio, Ontrop travels the country consulting with producers. He provides producers with an entire long day lighting (LDL) system and helps them implement it, even helping them secure rebates from their energy supplier if any are available.

When used correctly, Ontrop says LDL is one of the most profitable investments a dairy producer can make, "and one of the easiest things to do," potentially resulting in up to five pounds more milk per cow per day and a typical net return of \$100 per cow every year.

Ontrop says cows need 16 to 18 hours of light (15 foot candles in a barn, on average)

and 6 to 8 hours of darkness, with the same time on and off every day. In Wisconsin, that's often lights on at 5 a.m. and off at 10 p.m., regulated by a timeclock and a photocell, which automatically shuts the lights off in the morning, when natural lighting makes the barn bright enough.

Ontrop says a lot of industrial applications are beginning to cross over to agriculture. One notable example is Orion's Apollo Light Pipe, in which sunlight travels down through a sealed light pipe, allowing focused, usable sunlight to enter a building.

This direct renewable energy technology is starting to be used by dairy producers with high-roof facilities like machine sheds, farm shops, milking parlors and new cross ventilated barns.

"Power is definitely not going to get any cheaper. We know that," he states. Orion focuses on conservation and the most cost effective use of energy, advising producers to closely examine when they're using electricity and possibly making changes that put more of their demand "off peak." To assist with this Orion will soon offer milk chilling and water pumping technologies, and new manure digester systems.

Carbon credit trading is also on agriculture's horizon and Orion is already involved in it, Ontrop reports. He predicts the value of carbon credits to producers will likely increase in the future. Energy will transition from a cost center to an income source for conservation-minded producers, who farm smart in their fields and conserve - or even produce - energy in their facilities.



Mike Ontrop

By Jane Fyksen

Producer Profile



Patrick Christian farms with his three brothers and parents south of Lomira. They milk 720 cows and raise their own heifers and calves. The Christians also grow their own forage, including hay and corn, on 1,100 acres. Attending conferences is the most valuable part of Patrick's PDPW membership. He enjoys the interesting seminars that are offered, such as immigration and business-related topics. His favorite conference is the Annual Business Conference held in March. There he's able to pick from a wide range of topics, see new technologies in the Hall of Ideas, and meet a lot of people from around the state.

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Don't Cut Corners in Your Reproductive Program

In a time of high feed and input costs, many producers look to areas of their operation where they can cut back. The reproductive program is one aspect of a farm where producers should not cut back, says Paul Fricke, UW-Extension specialist in dairy cattle reproduction.

"I would never recommend in tough economic times to short cut on the breeding program – you can't do that," said Fricke. "You can never give up on reproduction because reproductive efficiency drives milk production."

Fricke received his bachelor's degree in animal science from the University of Nebraska, and his master's degree and doctorate from North Dakota State University. He came to

UW-Madison in 1995 for his post-doctorate and accepted his current position in 1998, which includes 75 percent Extension work and 25 percent research.

Getting cows pregnant at first breeding is critical to the success of the reproductive program for any operation. Producers should have a specific reproductive management program in place to achieve this.

"I've seen many different farms be successful with different strategies," said Fricke.

Every operation is different; therefore there are specific limitations amongst all farms. What program may suite one operation, will not necessarily be the best fit for another.

"Everybody has to do what

they're comfortable with and what works," said Fricke.

"People should choose a protocol that they can implement, that they can comply to and one that fits their management system."

"The important thing is that they have some kind of a plan to submit cows for first post-partum breeding," said Fricke.

The chance for a producer to get a cow pregnant, especially at first breeding, begins with accurate estrus detection.

"Accurate estrus detection is a foundation to a good breeding management program," said Fricke.

"Inaccurate estrus detection causes incredible problems with reproduction on a farm."

"PDPW has positioned itself well in the past, but more importantly, PDPW will play a major role in how the Wisconsin dairy industry positions itself for the future."

*~Jim Kruger,
So-Fine Bovines, LLC,
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See Breeding on page 30

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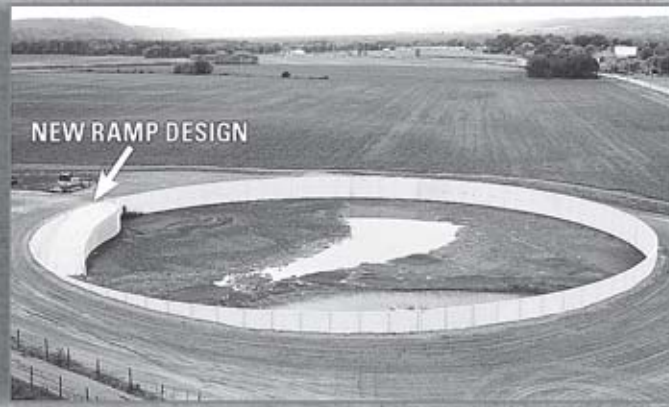


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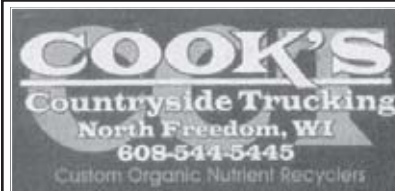
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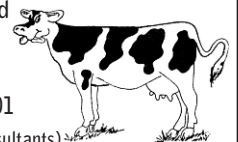
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"PDPW has benefited AgSource/CRI and the entire dairy industry in the Upper Midwest by serving as the forum and platform for a complete change in attitude about the business of milk production and its future in Wisconsin. It has made us all more successful and profitable."

~Pete Giacomini, AgSource Cooperative Services, Verona

Breeding

Continued from page 27

Once a program is developed to achieve accurate estrus detection, a synchronization program can be utilized to help get cows pregnant. There are a variety of synchronization programs that can be used. One of the most popular programs is a standard Presynch-Ovsynch program.

In this program, the first prostaglandin is given around day 36 post-calving (since it is early post-calving, no cows will be bred that show an estrus at this point). Then, the second prostaglandin is administered 14 days later at day 50, post-calving.

"Typically what many operations will do after the second prostaglandin is they'll 'cherry pick' or go ahead and breed the cows that show an estrus," said Fricke.

Any cows that are not bred and found in heat after the

second prostaglandin will start Ovsynch 12 days later and then get an Ovsynch timed artificial insemination, around 72 days in milk.

"Typically when I see this program in place on farms, you're going to see somewhere in the neighborhood of two-thirds of the cows inseminated to an estrus after the second prostaglandin and about one-third of the cows receiving timed insemination to an Ovsynch program for the first post-partum breeding," said Fricke.

"Another very common strategy is to use a Presynch-Ovsynch program, but don't do any estrus detection beforehand and just let all of the cows flow into the first timed insemination," he said.

A new synchronization program being developed by Milo Wiltbank at UW-Madison that producers can consider is the Double Ovsynch program.

"It's essentially two Ovsynch's back-to-back," said Fricke.

The downside of the program is that it includes another injection, adds more days of the week in cow handling and more overall cow handling periods. However, the results from research show about a 5-10 percent increase in conception rates to first postpartum TAI compared to a Presynch-Ovsynch protocol, said Fricke.

"Research is still going on and we're going to continue to look at it," he added.

Producers should also have a Resynch program in place for cows that fail to conceive to first breeding.

"We recommend that 32 days after the first postpartum breeding, you set up all cows with a GnRH injection (that would be a week before the herd health check)," said Fricke.

The reason for 32 days is so that the days of the week all stay the same for all of the injections. On day 39, during herd health check, non-pregnant cows receive

prostaglandin, followed by a second GnRH injection 56 hours later and 16 hours following that they get timed insemination. This specific program is called Ovsynch 56.

Most important, Ovsynch56 delays the TAI to about 16 hours after the second GnRH injection rather than breeding at the same time as the second GnRH injection, a modification called Cosynch. Recent research from UW showed that Ovsynch56 results in about a 9 percentage point increase in conception rate compared to either a 48 or a 72 hour Cosynch approach. Although Cosynch protocols are easier to implement, producers should use Ovsynch56 for both first postpartum and Resynch TAI to achieve better fertility.

While there are numerous synchronization programs that producers can utilize in their breeding program, they should do their research and look to a program that best fits their operation.

"The big issue is to continue to be aggressive at breeding cows to try to get them pregnant," said Fricke. "There's no real magical thing that we have to get them pregnant other than to continually expose them to chances to get pregnant – and that's really what these synch and re-synch programs do."

Even when producers look to cut back in some way on their operation to minimize costs, the reproductive program is an area they should not even consider.

"In reproduction you really can't cut any corners, you can't make many changes," said Fricke. "The consequences if you do are you're going to have less milk to sell in the future and when the milk price goes up in the future, or the economy gets better in the future, you can't just turn that around in a short period of time."

By Kelsi Hendrickson

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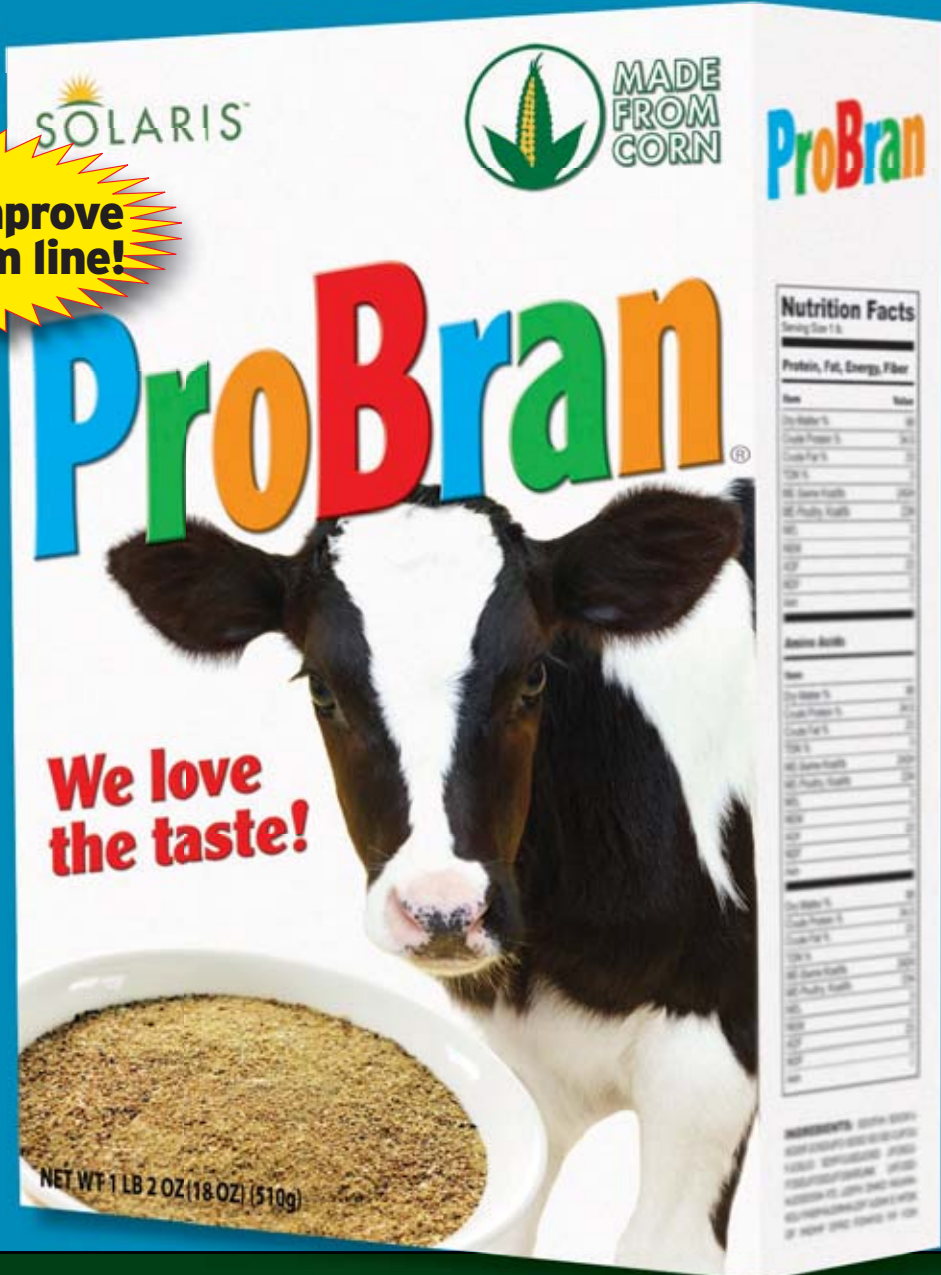
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