

Dairy Details

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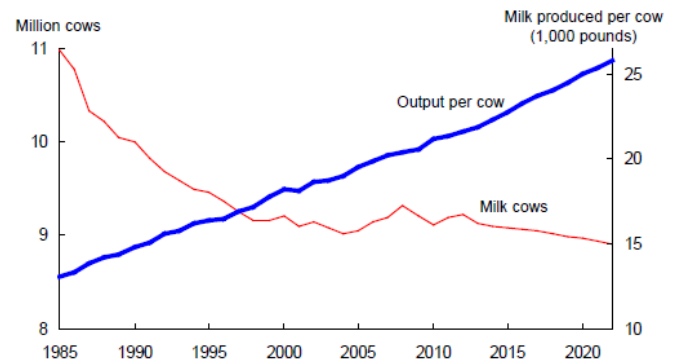
NORTHERN VALLEY DAIRY PRODUCTION MEDICINE CENTER

Oh, how far we've come...

I'm sure as a dairy producer who has struggled with awful prices for the past years, you are getting a little tired of industry professionals preaching to you opportunities for improvement are within your business and what you should change to be better. That's all we talk about; how can we improve? Which, is good because there is always room for improvement. Continuing to improve ourselves is going to a necessity if we are going to be able to feed over 9 billion people in 30 years. But, I think we often lose sight the improvements we've made to our farms over the last 30 years. And I think in hard times like these, remembering how far we've come can be the boost that many producers need right now.

More milk than in our wildest dreams

Today's dairy farmers are the masters of producing more with less. In 1950 the average cow was producing just under 6,000 pounds of milk per lactation. Today's average cow produces almost 25,000 pounds of milk per lactation. And dairy farmers are doing this using 90% less land, 65% less water and 64% fewer carbon emissions. This trend isn't showing any sign of stopping. Many believe that the dairy industry will be able to achieve a zero-carbon footprint for every gallon of milk produced in the near future. How many other industries can tell this kind of story?



Everyday technology

Technology has been a big reason why farmers have been able to become so much more efficient. Farmers were smart enough to embrace technology, which has allowed it to grow and become a part of every day farming. Robots are milking cows and our phones are telling us when a cow is sick and may need attention. We've never had more information at our fingertips and we are able to closely monitor a tremendous number of parameters on our dairies. And farmers are taking advantage of this information, using it to make important decisions every day. Technology is developing faster than ever and is going to continue to be vital to keeping up with the demands for our products throughout the world.

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Cows coming out of our ears...

We've talked a lot of replacement costs being one of the most important factors to profitability on dairies. Farmers used to not have to worry as much about replacement costs because it wasn't a question of whether or not one kept all their heifers because farmers needed every single heifer they produced in order to maintain their herd size. Today, many farms have heifers and cows coming out of their ears! Last year, in our herd comparison project where we compare data from all our clients' herds, we had over half of the herds with pregnancy rates of over 30%. That's amazing progress. It's amazing how far reproduction in the dairy cow has come.

Now farmers get to choose which animals they want to keep or sell, or which animals they want to get offspring from. And with technology, such as genomics, we are able to make educated, precise decisions in these areas.

Comfortable cows are productive cows...

The amount of research that has been done in cow comfort and how it affects their productivity over the last several years has made farmers stand up and take notice. They've adjusted stall sizes to better fit our cows. There is more common use of more comfortable bedding types such as deep bedded sand or compost bedding. The new barns that are built today for dairy cows have amazing ventilation systems and cooling systems, which makes us humans (myself included) who don't have central air conditioning in their house pretty jealous on a hot summer day!



Healthier than a horse...

Again, by embracing the new tools that have become available to them, farmers have made great strides in keeping animals healthy. Farmers don't lose hundreds of animals to devastating diseases such as brucellosis or tuberculosis because of farmers' continued commitment to vaccination and eradication programs. Technology has also had an impact on our cattle through health monitoring systems that help us identify sick cows early, cow side blood testing meters to help us provide correct treatments to cows, and even genomic testing by being able to test animals for specific health traits and breed for a healthier herd.

Looking back at how dairy farmers (and really all farmers in general) have adapted to our changing world, I applaud and thank all those who are involved in producing food for the world. Give yourself a well-deserved pat on the back. I understand that farming is a hard and often thankless job. But, try to remember the difference you are making in the world by keeping us all fed. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!



Cattle First Rewards

Producer Rebate Program • March 1 – April 30, 2019

Be sure to check out the brochure that has been included with this newsletter for details and the rebate form for BI's Cattle First Rewards program.

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