Jul/Aug 2025

AG NEWS

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Delaware County

UNDERVALUED FARM ASSET, GETTING OUR HEIFERS ON THE PAYROLL SOONER

-Desiree Keever, JD

Who doesn't like to be greeted in the morning by a happy, healthy heifer calf? She has value to your operation the moment she hits the ground, but in all of the things you need to manage as a producer, are you doing her justice in your dairy replacement raising program and maximizing returns in the investments you put into your calves? From her value as a replacement to maximizing the potential of your breeding program, what you do in your calf/heifer program has far reaching impacts on your bottom line.

From pre-fresh and calving protocols to age at first calving, there are many opportunities to yield higher returns and set that heifer up for the most productive value in the herd. Let's start with the basic economics of raising a replacement. Likely no surprise the most expensive phase of her growth cycle is from birth to weaning, with the highest single input being her feed. The other significant variables at this stage in the game are the housing system utilized and how labor intensive it is to take care of calves. Housing and nutrition also have an impact on health status, which will influence rate of gain, age at weaning, and potentially the animals' milking careers. Getting our calves off to a good start is vital in reducing our calf-rearing costs and maximizing her future profitability.

Post weaning to breeding age is the least expensive phase in raising replacements and presents great opportunity to capitalize on investments. This is not the time to let off the gas, keep her daily rates of gain high. This is also the time to make some decisions that will be critical to her future and your bottom line. What is your target age at first calving? Remember, she goes on payroll once she calves and generates a host of opportunities for your herd-more milk in your tank, a replacement to sell, a chance to selectively cull, the ability to rethink your breeding program and leverage the value of beef on dairy calves with replacements calving sooner. This is a chance to rethink the number of animal units on your farm and make sure that the time, energy and resources you put into feeding each head generates maximum return.

Per the July 2024 edition of CALS Pro Dairy "The Manager" the average cost of raising a replacement was $2,500, let's spend it wisely- raising the right number of replacements, calving timely to not add to the costs, optimizing on the sale of vibrant heifer calves, or capitalizing on the current beef market and breeding the lower quartile or third of our herd for beef on diary.

The choices are yours, make the most of them!

Updates: CCE Ag Team Celebrates!

CCE Delaware Agriculture Program Staff

- *Paul Cerosaletti, MS, CCA Agricultural Program Team Leader*
- *Desiree Keever, JD Farm Business Management & Ag Economic Development*
- *Lila Shafer, BT Horticulture*
- *Jessica Ladd,Ag/HE Administrative Assistant*

NYC Watershed Agricultural Program Staff:

- *Dale Dewing, MS CCA Watershed Program Leader*
- *Rich Toebe, PAS Watershed Livestock Educator*
- *April Wright Lucas, PAS CCA Precision Feed Management Specialist*
- *James Romack, MS Precision Feed Management Specialist*
- *Kim Holden, Sr. Administrative Assistant*

Celebrating 30 Years of Service:

Join us in congratulating Kim Holden, in our NYC Watershed Agricultural Program office, on 30 years of dedicated service to the team! Kim is the force behind much of the magic that happens in the office, a friendly voice for many of our producers and we are so fortunate to have her as part of our team! Here's to many more years with CCE Delaware!

Exciting New Additions to the CCE Ag Team:

We are thrilled to welcome Lila Shafer and Jessica Ladd to the CCE family! Both bring unique skills and enthusiasm to enhance our community programs.

Lila joins us as CCE's Horticulturist & Natural Resource Educator. In this role, Lila will collaborate with local educational initiatives, focusing on program development, implementation, and evaluation. A key aspect of her work will be supporting the Master Gardener Program and fostering volunteer engagement across the county.

Jessica has taken on the role of the Agricultural & Human Ecology Administrative Assistant. Jessica will provide crucial support by managing information requests, creating promotional materials, handling event registrations, and offering both technical and administrative assistance to our teams.

Both Lila and Jessica are eager to contribute to the growth of our programs and are excited to serve the community alongside the dedicated CCE team.

Upcoming Programs


95th Annual Delaware County Farm Tour

Friday, July 11th 2025,
11:00am–3:00 pm



Stop #1: *11:00 AM - 12:30 pm*: Harmonie Farms - The Mattsons
10790 NY-30, Downsville, NY 13755

- Recently Operational Robotic Milkers and Feed Pushing system
- 175 Cow Freestall Barn with stall renovation
- Long term no-till farm

Stop #2: *1:00 pm – 3:00*: - Brookside Maple and Farm
– Matt, Micah, and Caroline Scobie - *2544 Co Rd 2, Delancey, NY 13752*

- 4500 tap Maple Operation with value added; NY Grown & Certified
- Diversified marketing: online; farmers' markets; self-serve farm stand, local stores
- 40 head cow/calf operation with winter Feeding and sorting barn
- Sheep and wool products

Precision Ag Manure Injection and Semi-Solid Spreading Demonstration

Stop #2 is our lunch stop - bring your own lunch. - Milk & Ice cream provided.

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Delaware County

GET ON THE MAP:
The Delaware Bounty Farm Foods Map

A free marketing tool for all Delaware County farms providing farm products directly to the consumer, digital and in print, listing is easy! While you may have missed out on adding your farm to this edition of the printed version, you can always be included in our digital version, updated regularly.

Scan the QR code to add your listing!

Don't Forget To Find Us At The 138th Delaware County Fair!

Body Condition & Scoring of Livestock

Monday August 11, 2025 (Sheep Barn)
3:00 PM Sheep (Body Condition Scoring Adults, Finish Scoring lambs
4:00 PM Sheep & Goats(Weights)

Tuesday August 12, 2025 (Goat Barn)
2:00 PM- 3:00 PM Goats (Body Condition Scoring Adults, Finish Scoring Kids)

Wednesday August 13, 2025 (By Manure Pad)
3:00 PM -5:00 PM Beef & Dairy Cattle (Weights)

Friday August 15, 2025 (Beef Barn)
2:00 PM -3:00 PM Beef Cattle (Body Condition Scoring Adults, Quality Grading of Growing & Finished Stock)

2025 Ag Program Sponsors

Platinum Sponsor:
- Farm Credit East ACA
- Delaware County Farm Bureau
- Albano's Precision Application

Gold Sponsor:
- Lutz Feed Co.

Silver Sponsor:
- Wayne Bank

Bronze Sponsor:
- Stamford Farmers Cooperative

This support of our programming is very much appreciated by us & the farms we serve.

Plan Ahead

Keep an eye out for these upcoming events:

- Summer Pasture Walks
- Ag Energy Efficiencies

Stay Connected:
- ccedelaware.org
- Follow us on Facebook: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County: Agriculture
- Email: delaware@cornell.edu
- Phone 607.865.6531

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

Red Meat Allergy?

It Might Not Be What You Think

Written by Kim Cassano, Delaware County Farmer and Rich Toebe, CCE Sr. Resource Educator, MS, PAS NYC Watershed Agricultural Program

There is a new threat lurking on our farms carried by a familiar pest. As if it weren't enough that a tick bite can transmit Lyme's and other diseases, we now know that it can also make you allergic to red meats and other mammal products. A simple tick bite can mean the end of summer's juicy burgers and ice cream cones! Alpha-gal Syndrome is an allergy to all mammal meats and can include reactions to dairy, gelatin, carrageenan and other mammal byproducts. That includes beef, pork, lamb, goat, venison, rabbit and other mammals.

This allergy is particularly sneaky because the reactions don't start immediately. They often start 2-8 hours after a meal. You may wake up in the middle of the night after a particularly delicious steak dinner, with swelling or itching and hives--or you may have abdominal cramping and other stomach ailments. You might even experience full-blown anaphylaxis and need a trip to the ER—like 60% of people who have this syndrome. Most practitioners are still unfamiliar with this new health issue. You can find more information about symptoms, diagnosis and more at https://alphagalinformation.org.

And if that wasn't tricky enough the reactions don't occur every time you eat a burger. They call this the "anytime not every time" allergy because it is so unpredictable. Allergic reactions are boosted by cofactors such as exercise, alcohol, and NSAIDs. You might notice a stronger or faster reaction if you have a few beers with your burger. Some people only seem to react with the help of one of these cofactors. Children's reactions often occur after playing sports.

One US tick is particularly effective at transmitting alpha gal syndrome. Unlike other ticks, the lone star tick doesn't wait patiently in the underbrush for a new host to pass by. It actively hunts for its next meal and can cover one hundred feet in just five minutes. Farmers are particularly vulnerable because ticks are often found in fields and forest. Consider adding a layer of double-sided sticky tape to the top of your boots and using a lint roller on your clothing when you come in from outside.

Unlike Lyme's and other diseases, the tick does not have to stay attached for 24 plus hours to transmit this allergy. A simple bite will do. This makes it even more important to avoid contact in the first place. Luckily, permethrin treated clothing is very effective against ticks. You can treat your own clothing or buy it pre-treated from several retailers. I use both methods because additional tick bites increase sensitivity and can lead to bigger reactions.

Alpha gal syndrome was once thought to be a Southern problem, but it has been creeping north along with the deer that host the ticks. Suffolk County is now the nation's hot spot, and Delaware County farmers are already being diagnosed with this syndrome.

If you think you may be experiencing allergic reactions to meat and other mammal products talk to your health care provider about getting a blood test for Alpha-gal IgE.
And wear permethrin treated clothing and footwear to protect yourself from tick bites –I wish I had!

Fruit & Veg Corner

CREATIVE PRACTICES AT BERRY BROOK FARM

By Lila Shafer, BT Horticulturist

On Tuesday, June 3, 2025, Berry Brook Farm opened their gates for visitors from Delaware, Schoharie, and Sullivan Counties for an insightful tour of their wash & pack system. Owned and operated by Patrick Hennebery, Eleanor Blakeslee, and their family, Berry Brook Farm has been an organic produce farm in Delaware County for years, operating across multiple locations in upstate New York.

The tour highlighted the farm's efficient washing and packing system, housed in a repurposed dairy barn. The former milk tank now serves as a water reservoir for washing mixed greens, while an old washing machine is used to dry them. For other produce, the farm employs feed troughs with minimal plumbing and a dedicated root washer. The system is both resourceful and sustainable, highlighting creative reuse of existing infrastructure.

Berry Brook employs meticulous use of checklists for harvesting and packing. This ensures precise quantities are prepared for each market, with estimates tailored to sell out or nearly sell out, optimizing efficiency and minimizing waste. Thoughtful systems and adaptive practices drive the farm's thriving organic produce business.

Creative Practices at Berry Brook Farm

Repurposing Existing Infrastructure

- Transformed an old dairy barn into an efficient, customized washing and packing station tailored to their workflow.
- Clever reuse of equipment:
- A former milk tank now serves as a water reservoir.
- An old washing machine functions as a salad spinner.
- Feed troughs are adapted for washing produce.
- These resourceful solutions minimize cost and environmental impact while maximizing functionality.

Use of Standardized Checklists

- Harvest quantities are estimated using past sales data to consistently aim for sell-outs.
- Sales data is tracked and analyzed to fine-tune production planning and market readiness.
- Overharvesting is avoided, helping to reduce food waste, labor costs, and excess inventory.

Efficient Wash & Pack Workflow

- Equipment and tools are arranged to support a smooth flow from harvest to final packaging.
- Emphasis on workflow design ensures cleanliness, speed, and team efficiency during busy processing times.

Invasive Species

Submitted by Lila Shafer BT, Horticulturist

An invasive species is a non-native species that when introduced to a new environment either intentionally or unintentionally, becomes established and causes environmental, economic, or human health harm.

Invasive Insects:

- Emerald ASh Borer
- Asian Long Horned Beetle
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Spotted Lantern Fly

Invasive Plants:

- Japanese Knotweed
- Japanese Barberry
- Giant Hogweed
- Water Chestnuts

HOW TO PREVENT THE SPREAD...

- VERIFY THAT THE PLANTS YOURE PURCHSING ARE NOT INVASIVE
- CLEAN BOATS WHEN TRAVELING TO A NEW BODY OF WATER
- CLEAN SHOES WHEN TRAVELING TO A NEW AREA TO PREVENT WEED SEEDS OR PATHAGENS FROM SPREADING
- PURCHASE LOCAL FIREWOOD TO PREVENT THE SPEAD OF INVASIVE INSECTS.
- **VOLUNTEER TO HELP REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES FROM PUBLIC LANDS**

Information Sources:
https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov
https://www.canr.msu.edu

JUL/AUG 2025

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

Watershed Agricultural Council
Agricultural Program
nycwatershed.org

USING GRAZING TO OBTAIN OPTIMAL GROWTH IN DAIRY HEIFERS.

By Rich Toebe, CCE Sr. Resource Educator, MS, PAS NYC Watershed Agricultural Program

Using pastures to be the primary source of nutrition for growing dairy heifers can be a very economical way to develop replacement cows for your dairy. In addition to lowering costs, pasturing heifers can provide health benefits such as help develop strong feet and legs, support rumen development, and reduce pregnancy and calving complications. Other benefits include reduced manure collection and when the pasture system is properly designed and managed, reduced time in caring for the heifer group.

At what age does it make sense to start grazing heifers?
A newborn calf does not have a functioning rumen. By two months, the rumen starts functioning but is not fully developed until 9 months of age. Prior to six months of age, you should limit the dry matter from pasture forage to less than a third of the total dry matter intake. You should also continue to supplement with grain until you reach nine months of age. Weighing the animals during this period of time is a good way to know if your supplemental feeds are adequately meeting your growth targets.

Pasture Quality
Nutrient demands of a growing heifer are based on its age, its weight, and your targeted ADG goal. Having this information in hand prepares you to manage your pastures for these heifers. Essentially, we want a pasture forage that is high in energy and protein. For the unbred heifers, TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients) would ideally be above 66% and crude protein at about 15%. For bred heifers, TDN should be above 63% and CP at 14%. Pasture of this quality will be able to nearly or fully meet the nutritional needs of the heifers. Ideally your nutritionist would periodically test your pasture forage to fine tune the supplement you may be providing.

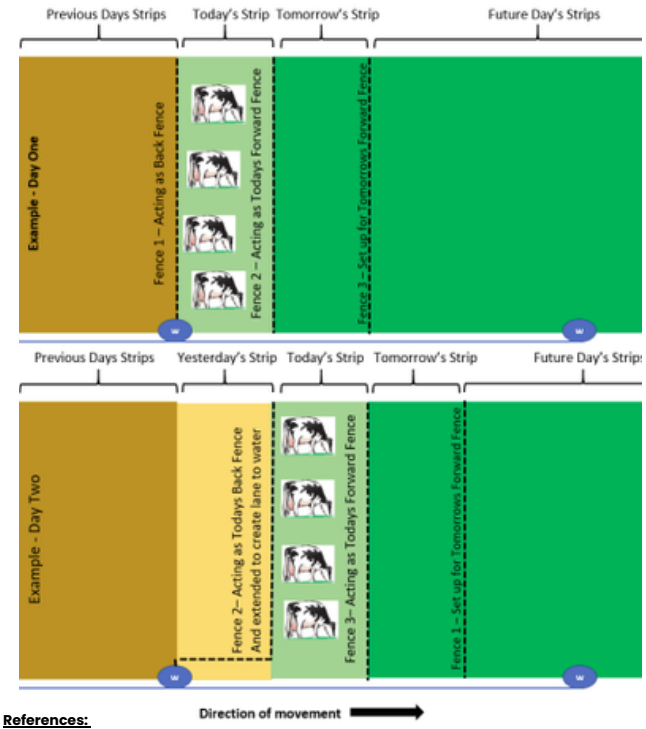
So, the above works only if there is adequate forage present to allow for large mouthfuls of forage with each bite without needing to walk around looking for the next bite. Ideally this pasture would have at least 1500 pounds of available dry matter/acre. To achieve this, the forage (depending on grass and legume species) would be 8 to 15 inches high and quite dense. Putting it all into practice OK, let's move beyond the academic lesson and into what this actually looks like in practice. There are really three key "rules" to managing pastures to optimize forage productivity and quality in pastures: 1) Short duration of occupation in any given paddock (a paddock is a subdivision of the total pasture and is the basic building block of a rotational or intensive pasture management system); 2) Allow for adequate rest (non-occupation) to allow the forage to regrow; and 3) Leave adequate residual forage post grazing.

What this means in practice is creating paddocks that will be occupied for one to three days. When the heifers leave the paddock, approximately 50% of the forage remains (4" to 6" depending on plant species). The heifers won't return to this paddock until it has regrown back to 8" to 15" of height. Depending on the time of year and weather, this will typically be anywhere from 20 to 50 days. If you are moving your heifers every day, you would need 51 paddocks. If you move them every three days, you would need 18 paddocks. The paddock size is determined by the number of animals, how much each animal is expected to eat, and the number of days of occupation. The good news is that with careful observation of the starting versus residual amounts of forage with each move, you quickly get a feel for how large to make each paddock.

This moving of heifers and making paddocks may sound like a lot of work. But with a good fence energizer and grounding system combined with geared reels of polywire and step-in posts, it typically only takes 15 to 30 minutes to move the heifers and set up the next paddock. Compare this to the time and cost it takes to put up feed, deliver the feed to the animals, and then pick up and spread their manure. With a well thought out grazing system, using pastures to develop your replacement cows can be a very efficient and rewarding management strategy that can reduce your

bottom line expenses, reduce labor, and help you meet your performance targets such as Age to First Calving and ideal body weights at breeding and calving.

Strip Grazing – An Efficient Way to Rotate Heifers One easy way to move heifers to fresh pasture is called strip grazing where the heifers are given a fresh 'strip' of grass every day. This is typically achieved using only three reels of polywire. Imagine three single wire fences parallel to each other. The heifers are contained by two of the fences referred to as the forward fence (separating the heifers from where they currently are and tomorrows paddock); and the back fence (separating the heifers from where they currently are and where they were yesterday) . The third fence is set to be the next day's forward fence. Each move involves letting the cattle into the next paddock. The previously set up forward fence becomes the new forward fence; yesterday's forward fence becomes the back fence; and the back fence can be moved to be the next forward fence. For the purpose for access to water, you may not move yesterday's back fence right away (essentially leaving it in place to continue to act as the back fence); rather you would take down yesterday's forward fence and set it up to be the next day's forward fence. The alternative is to use some of the remaining wire on the back fence reel to create a lane back to the water. The diagram shows this second option.



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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

ProDairy Online On-Demand Courses

PRO-DAIRY offers online dairy production courses completed by students nationwide and internationally. While some background in dairy management is helpful, courses range from basic to advanced and are taught by industry experts.

Courses are on-demand, allowing students to start anytime and complete them within six months at their own pace. The virtual classroom includes pre-recorded lectures, supplemental materials, and built-in assessments.

Participants receive a certificate upon completion and may request continuing education credits through Cornell University's School of Continuing Education.

Cost is $295.00

To Register Visit : https://cals.cornell.edu/pro-dairy/events-programs/online-courses

Crop Management

This course covers key agronomic principles and practices for field and forage crop production, focusing on grains and forages common to NY and the Northeast U.S.

Dairy Management

This course provides dairy farm personnel with knowledge and practical skills in calf and heifer management, covering nutrition, health, genetics, and housing.

Forage Management

This course provides practical information for managing forage crops on a dairy farm, including silage science to forage quality, harvest, preservation, and feed-out.

CORNELL CONNECTIONS

Grass Management for Dry Dairy Cows

Adapted by April Wright Lucas, PAS, CCA, Precision Feed Managment Specialist, NYC Watershed Agricultural Program from the Cornell publication Grass Management For Dry Dairy Cows written by Jerry H. Cherney and Debbie J.R. Cherney

Watershed Agricultural Council
Agricultural Program
nycwatershed.org

Managing potassium (K) content in perennial grass forage is critical for dry dairy cows, as excessive K can lead to metabolic disorders like hypocalcemia and which lead to other health related disorders that significantly reduce milk production and reproduction efficiency. Many dairy farms use grass as a manure sink, which increases soil K levels, making it challenging to produce low K forage. This information was compiled from a paper from two Cornell University professors: Jerry Cherney, Department of Soil, Crop & Atmospheric Sciences and Debbie Cherney, Department of Animal Science. They're referenced paper "Grass Management for Dairy Cows" can be found as a link on the CCE Delaware County Website. This article outlines strategies for producing low K grass forage specifically for dry cows with some further insightful strategies.
Key Recommendations:

1. Field Selection: Choose fields with low K-supplying soils, identified through soil testing about every three years. Select fields that get little or no manure to harvest grass for this group of cattle.
2. Grass Species: Use timothy, reed canarygrass, or smooth bromegrass, and avoid orchardgrass or perennial ryegrass due to their higher K accumulation. Legumes also are higher in K content.
3. Fertilization: Avoid all forms of K fertilization, including manure. Apply moderate to heavy nitrogen (N) fertilization (75-100 lbs./acre/harvest) to boost yields and apply after the 1st cutting to avoid rapid K uptake.
4. Harvest Management: Harvest twice per year—mid-June and mid-September. Grass regrowth in the fall is typically lower in K and ideal for cows close to calving.
5. Monitoring: If spring forage K content drops below 1.7%, consider modest K fertilization after spring harvest to maintain plant health. Don't guess at the content, take samples for laboratory analysis using wet chemistry.The quick lab NIR (Near Infrared Spectrometry) is not accurate enough to determine the K content.

Grass Forage Species Selection: Potassium uptake by species do vary.Cool weather species are predominate in this area with both orchardgrass and perennial ryegrass as species that tend to have greater uptake of K compared to timothy, reed canarygrass or smooth bromegrass. For New York State there is a handy web-based program available for site specific forage specie recommendations. This is based on soil type and ranges intended for use that include dry dairy cows. Note that some web drivers take "forages.org" and some need http://forages.org.

Forage Quality: Use of a two-cut system harvested the first year may have a high K content compared to the following year. Grass harvested in the next year with a two-cut system should show a lower K content with the content declining with the second cutting. K almost always declines from spring to fall harvests and with increased maturity. Sufficient fiber from 1st cut to the second cut on fiber will decrease (65-70% NDF in June, 50-60% NDF in September) and the crude protein (12-15%) maintained for dry cows but is unsuitable for lactating cows.

Feeding Considerations: Low K forage (<2% K) helps create an anionic diet for dry cows during the transition period, reducing the risk of milk fever or hypocalcemia. Corn Silage ranges from .81to 1.34 % K as corn silage can be used to increase energy content but should not dominate the diet to maintain bodyweight through the dry period (recommending no gain or loss in the dry period).

Grazing Management: Following most of the above considerations are important. But be aware that lush early spring pastures tend to be higher in K. Starting out in the spring if you must graze pastures, graze at a height higher than you would for the milking herd. Remember that cows tend to go to the low areas to regraze short forages and in the early spring those short forages may have a high K level. Make a point of adjusting the diet magnesium upwards to .45% and keep a watchful eye on behavior. Some farms do not even let the close-up cows on early spring lush pasture but will bale graze lower K grass hay in a smaller paddock nearer to the barn to keep a watchful eye on them.
Summary: Proper management of perennial grass can produce low potassium forage and could improve dry cow health with minimal feeding issues for prefresh cows. This approach involves careful field selection, species choice, proper fertilization, and harvest timing, forage sampling, and a watchful eye.

DAIRY INDUSTRY IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITY

Dairy has always been an anchor to Delaware County Agriculture, and with the constant contraction we see in this segment of ag, it is more important than ever to come together as a community to support each other. Please join CCE DC and NYCAHM in a project focused on helping you, the producers, address the stressors in the industry. Reach out to Desiree if you are interested in participating, time commitment is between 1-2 hours. Email: dnk2@cornell.edu or call 607.865.6531!

Energy Corner

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Smart Energy Choices

Your Guide to Energy Efficient Agriculture

Ag Energy NY offers free consultations and resources to help New York farmers improve energy efficiency and explore clean energy options. Through NYSERDA, farms earning at least $1,000/year in retail sales qualify for a free energy assessment, covering lighting and equipment efficiency (note: insulation and air sealing are not included).

The program provides recommendations on energy-efficient technologies, conservation practices, and alternate operating methods, along with information on available incentives. Resources and fact sheets are available for a range of farm sectors, including guidance for those interested in on-farm renewable energy or leasing land for large-scale solar.

Contact Sam Edel, Delaware Countys Community Energy Advisor (607) 366 0833 x3 or se379@cornell.edu for more information

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

Useful Metrics for Continuously Monitoring and Improving Reproductive Management

Watershed Agricultural Council
Agricultural Program
nycwatershed.org

Written by James Romack MS, CCE Delaware County

Everybody looks at the milk production data provided in their DHI reports, but have you ever stepped back to consider what drives milk production? FRESH COWS!! And just how do you get fresh cows? Successful reproduction management! The first step in successful reproductive management is assessing how well you are doing at the present time. And we've all heard the adage "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it" … Given that, the metrics which I looked at the most as a herdsperson to see how well I was doing with reproduction were: days in milk (DIM), calving interval, days to first service, age at first calving (AFC), and services per conception.

DIM was my personal "go-to" metric because the "fresher" your herd is, the higher their potential for milk production. 180 days is a good target for goal setting purposes. When DIM reaches 200, your herd is becoming "stale", and more attention needs to be given to reproductive management. DIM exceeding 225 indicates room for improvement.

Calving interval is a useful metric because ideally, we would like to get a newborn calf and thus begin a new lactation each year. A realistic goal for calving interval is 12.5 months, or 375 days, and anything over 13 months (395 days) is too long.

Days to first service is a factor which determines calving interval. My target as a herdsperson was to get cows bred for the first time by 60 days in milk. I always had a voluntary wait period of 50 days to make sure the cows were healthy and fertile. Breeding sooner than that quite often ends with early embryonic death because of incomplete uterine involution and low-grade uterine infections. So, I always let the first and occasionally second heats go by depending on whether the cow had any health problems during the transition period such as metritis or ketosis.

Age at first calving the only metric for assessing the reproductive performance of your replacement heifers. AFC is extremely important because it determines lifetime milk production. It is sometimes forgotten that a dairy cow has a finite productive life. Think of it this way, as people we all age and sooner or later we will need to exit the workforce to make room for younger, more productive people. So, the sooner we enter the workforce, the higher our lifetime earning potential for our chosen occupation. To get your heifers into the workplace sooner, you need to nourish them properly to attain rapid growth and then begin breeding them at 13 months of age to ensure that ON AVERAGE all are pregnant by 15 months of age such that they will freshen at 24 months of age.

Services per conception tells the whole story on the success of your breeding program for BOTH cows and heifers. A good program will range from 1.8 to 3.0 services on average to get a cow pregnant, and a little less than 2.0 to get a heifer pregnant. Some factors influencing services per conception include to: heat detection rate, conception rate, and breeding code. These are all intertwined mind you! Heat detection rate is a measure of how good the farm staff is at finding cows which need to be bred. Anything above 50% is good, with 70% being excellent. Consistency is what really drives heat detection rates. Having set times in both the morning and evening to watch for heats is an excellent approach. Adding things like tail paint or KMAR Heatmount detectors to visual detection to cover the bases is a good idea. Also don't rule out hormone synchronization programs! These can work well on any size herd but do require veterinary assistance. Conception rate measures the success of insemination. Factors which influence it are heat detection rate (was the cow really in heat), timing of insemination (did you breed her too soon or too late), semen handling, semen placement, and uterine health. Breeding code (why you bred the animal) is also important to track. Knowing the success of individual strategies such as standing heat, clear mucous discharge, rubbed tail paint or ruptured KMARs, and so forth can help you to fine tune your program by knowing which practices are the most successful.

In closing, always remember that your heifers are the future of your herd! They are expensive to raise and getting them into the milking herd to recoup those expenses as quickly as possible is best for the profitability of your farm. You wouldn't pay for a child to attend college, and then let him/her live at home after graduation without entering the workforce for an extended period of time would you? The same is true for your heifers. To get your heifers into the workforce in a timely manner requires doubling their weight as calves before weaning, proper nutrition post weaning, proper health care, and a structured reproductive program to prepare them for their careers as lactating cows.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Delaware County is rich in on-farm milk processing facilities and if you own one, now is your time to think about a grant! The NE Dairy Innovation Center has an open grant for dairy processor modernization. Learn more: https://nedairyinnovation.com/grants/dairy-processor-modernization-grant/

Get Certified NOW!!

NY Grown and certified will be opening another round of grants this fall! Our county was well represented in the last round of with number of applications and awards, let's do it again and continue to grow all that is good in our Delaware County Ag!

Get each of your farm commodities certified, learn more at: https://certified.ny.gov/get-certified

Desiree is happy to help, reach out: dnk2@cornelll.edu

The Agritourism Brief

Biosecurity for Agritourism

Agritourism Project Work Team

1 Animal Biosecurity

Animals can transmit disease between each other, but humans & animals can also transmit disease back & forth.

Protect your animals and visitors:

- Ask visitors to come with clean clothes, and that they not come from another farm.
- Ask visitors to leave pets at home for their own protection and the protection of your animals.
- Provide handwashing & sanitizer stations.
- Provide shoe sanitizing stations to enter & leave animal areas.
- Provide visitors with disposable plastic booties.

2 Plant Biosecurity

Plant biosecurity has a few aspects of concern. The main issue is disease or virus contamination on tools customers bring to cut plants. The other cause of disease & virus spread is through soil touching plant material.

Protect your plants:

- Provide customers with scissors or pruners.
- Provide customers with picking/harvesting containers.
- Clean scissors/pruners after every use.
- Have customers wash or sanitize hands before picking/harvesting.
- Give a demo of proper techniques before allowing them to begin.

3 Human Biosecurity

Diseases are transmissible between animals & humans. A variety of foodborne illnesses can be transmitted, including:

- Salmonella
- Campylobacter
- E. Coli
- Parasites

Protect your guests:

- Provide handwashing stations & sanitizer
- Provide shoe sanitizer station to enter & leave animal areas.

4 Employee Training

Employees can't protect your biosecurity if they don't understand the importance! Train them, make sure they are able to communicate the risk to the public and can maintain guest adherence to your policies. Employees should also implement biosecurity practices.

5 Tour Participation

If part of a multi-stop tour, try to only have one stop with livestock to avoid cross contamination. If that is not possible, maintain strict protocols, increase distances from animals and be vigilant in monitoring your guests.

6 Have A Plan

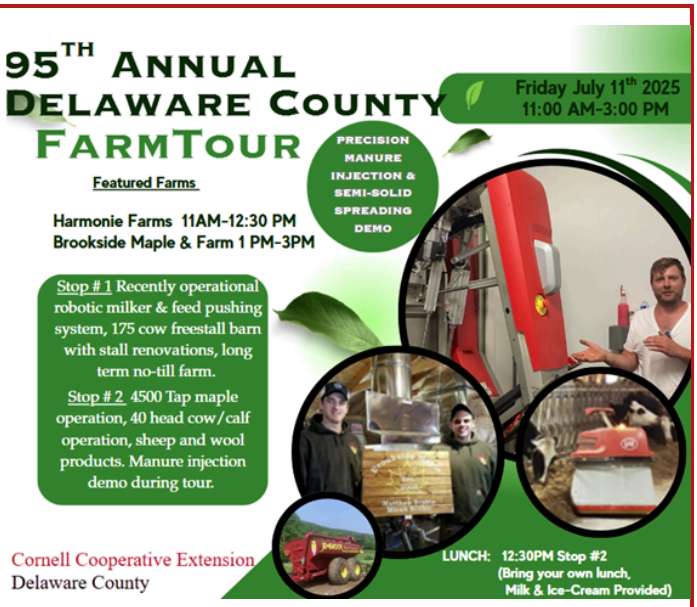
A plan for a biosecurity outbreak is advised for every farm. Things to consider for a biosecurity plan should include:

- Communication plan to the public via social media, website, etc.
- Quarantining the farm
- Have a dedicated person for communication & media interaction

The 95th Delaware County Farm Tour

July 11, 2025

Explore the heart of agriculture at the 95th Annual Delaware County Farm Tour! From innovative robotic milking at Harmonie Farms to a 4500 tap maple operation at Brookside Maple. Join CCE in embracing our roots and supporting our farmers!



Stop #1- Harmonie Farms 11:00 AM-12:30 PM
Stop #2-Brookside Maple 12:30 PM -3:00 PM

(Stop # 2 is our lunch stop- Bring your own lunch- Milk & Ice Cream Provided)

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Delaware County

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34570 State Hwy 10, Suite2
Hamden, NY 13782-1120

FIRST CLASS MAIL