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Higher DCRs: better management info, larger young sire payments

Just as all milk production records aren't created equal, neither are young sire programs or on-farm management reports. Yet, young sire programs share a common benefit – participation can significantly (if not entirely) offset milk testing costs. Increasing your milk testing service level may improve the data's accuracy and reliability, and lead to higher young sire program benefits. In general, a higher level of service requires a higher fee. But, before you balk at a higher fee, look at the big picture and consider how a "full-service" milk testing program may actually cost you less in the long run. The benefits of a slightly higher-priced testing program may more than pay for the additional costs.

How can that occur? A "traditional" milk testing program (monthly, certified supervised milk tests with all milkings weighed and sampled for all lactating cows in your herd) yields a data collection rating (DCR) of 100. Milk testing programs at a lower service level yield a lower DCR. Records for cows that are tested monthly with a supervised AM/PM type plan where one of two milkings are weighed and sampled receive a DCR of about 95. Cows with supervised monthly testing where one of three milkings are weighed and sampled get DCRs of 88-90. In contrast, records from Owner-Sampler testing programs receive DCRs of 70-75. Nearly all AI organizations provide higher young sire benefits for records with higher DCRs. Testing plans that weigh and sample a full-day's milkings earn higher benefits than AM/PM plans and supervised testing plans earn higher benefits than Owner-Sampler plans.

At the farm level, monthly, supervised milk tests generate more useful management information so you can make better feeding, reproduction, herd health and culling deci-

sions to enhance your dairy's profitability. Bottom line: DHI testing provides sound information to objectively manage your business.

AI organizations consider DCRs when setting young sire program benefits, because higher DCRs generate more accurate and reliable information. Not only do accurate and reliable milk and component production records help evaluate young sires, they also help identify the best prospective bull mothers through USDA's cow indexes.

"The objective of any successful young sire program is to identify the true genetic value of the bulls being sampled," explained Chuck Sattler, Select Sires vice president, genetic programs. "Accurately evaluating a sire's early daughters is critical for future satisfaction of the many dairy producers who use semen from proven sires."

Select Sires, for example, provides semen credits for each young sire daughter that produces a lactation record usable in genetic evaluations. The value of these credits depends on the value of the herd average DCR for milk weights and component testing. Select Sires awards \$50 certificates for a herd DCR of 90 or higher, \$40 for a herd DCR of 80-89, and \$30 for a herd DCR 70-80.

As you can see, spending just a little more on a more reliable and accurate milk testing program can yield payments that offset increased milk testing fees. Visit with your milk testing service provider and AI reps to discover how an enhanced milk testing program can yield more accurate and reliable information, and generate larger young sire program benefits.

Log on to www.dhia.org/dbc_articles.asp to learn more about DCRs.