



Quality Certification Services Inc.

On-farm meters fit today's DHI system

Regulatory officials audit and calibrate scales at grocery stores and pumps at gas stations. But who assures the accuracy of electronic milk meters used in milking parlors? Quality Certification Services (QCS), a subsidiary of National Dairy Herd Information Association (DHIA).

Electronic meters used on today's modern dairies generate a lot of data, with a significant amount of that data going to USDA's Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory (AIPL). This data impacts sires' genetic evaluations. If accurate information goes in, then accurate information comes out. Thus, proper animal and milk sample identification, and accurate electronic milk meters play an extremely important role in accurate, credible and reliable genetic evaluations.

QCS, acting under the authority of the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB), requires all electronic milk meters generating milk weights be of an approved type. The QCS web site (www.quality-certification.com) lists approved electronic milk meter and sampling devices. All new or repaired meters must be calibrated and information reported to the appropriate milk testing organization before AIPL can accept generated data from these electronic milk meters.

Additionally, QCS (acting under CDCB's authority) requires that all electronic milk meters be calibrated annually. Milk testing organizations must provide documentation on an annual basis for each herd using electronic milk meters. Acceptable documentation includes a water test calibration report or statistical report generated from dairy management software, such as Dairy Comp or PC Dart. Water test calibration reports must identify the meter make, model, number of meters, date, tolerances and party performing the calibration check. Another option for dairy producers includes statistical reports. These reports must list the herd code, all stalls in the parlor, indication of performance of each meter, calculation deviations and number of observations.

When these conditions are not met, the dairy records processing center will code the herd data as not meeting calibration requirements and data

will not be included in the Genetic Evaluation Program. Consequently, dairies using young sires will most likely lose access to young sire credits and/or incentives. Plus, cows from these herds will not have production PTAs calculated, nor will data from those herds be included in the calculation of sire production PTAs. Breed associations will not have access to data from these herds, so these herds may be ineligible for breed programs, contests and/or incentives.

If a herd does not meet minimum calibration report requirements for electronic milk meters and wants herd data included in genetic evaluations, one option remains. The dairy's milk testing organization may have a field technician use certified portable milk meters on such dairies.

For four years, QCS and National DHIA have worked closely with the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR) to establish approval guidelines for milk testing devices. Significant National DHIA/ICAR efforts developed a system to decouple samplers and meters, with changes coming later this year. These groups will put concerted efforts toward working with new manufacturers.

The DHI system has developed cost-efficient milk testing methods and innovative testing plans to accommodate most business-minded dairy producers. Just because you operate a "large dairy" or don't use a "traditional milk tester," don't think that AIPL isn't interested in the data your herd generates. A little effort in having a QC-certified field service person calibrate your electronic milk meters can go a long way in gathering accurate information and reaping significant young sire credits/incentives when data are used in genetic evaluations.

For more information about the QC Program and QCS, contact Steven Sievert, manager, QC Program, at 608-848-6455, ext. 113, e-mail: sjsievert@dhia.org, or Jay Mattison, administrator of QCS, ext. 111, e-mail: jmattison@dhia.org. Or, log on to www.quality-certification.com.