

Dollar Drain Dollar Saving Tips for Texas Dairies

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Access "Real Time" Information

With milk prices flat, your ability to manage is a critical factor for your operation's profit or loss. To make decisions that impact your bottom line, you must have immediate or "real time" access to data that results in informed decision-making.

Historically, many record keeping systems only allow access to monthly production and management information. With the introduction of microcomputer based programs, access to production facts in "real time" became a management reality. For producers that don't have microcomputers, herd recorders leave lists that have action events and when they should occur. With recent computer advances, hand held computers are being developed that provide for "real time" access to data and provide a link between the on-farm microcomputer and the herd recorder.

The Raleigh dairy records processing center, DRMS, has continued the development of their PocketDairy program. A dairy producer purchases a hand held computer (\$199). When the herd is tested, the hand held is synchronized with the main database maintained by the recorder. Between herd recorder visits this new program allows the dairy producer to enter status data, such as breeding, calving and other information. In this way, the producer has a "real time" database.

Since the producer is able to access lists from the hand held, it is current. For example, when he pulls up a list for cows to freshen on his hand held, only the cows still to freshen will be on the list. Those that have calved since the recorder was at the dairy no longer appear. When synchronization occurs during the monthly herd recorder's visit, information is electronically transferred between the main database and hand held updates, reducing the potential for data transcription errors. This is an inexpensive option to have "real time" data with which to make informed decisions.

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