a look at

DAIRY FARMING

JUNE 2014
A Special Supplement to the
WINCHESTER PRESS



Dairy Herd Improvement results for 2013

Cow Comfort

Benefits of Automated Feeding Systems

Recipes

Dairy Herd Improvement results for 2013

Following *Winchester Press* tradition, we are once again publishing the top farms in local herd listings from the 2013 CanWest DHI (Dairy Herd Improvement) Ontario Progress Report.

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Ontario's best

The local region had four farms place in the top 63 for herds with low SCC (somatic cell counts) in the province.

Placing in the 19th spot was Ferme Brissfrance, operated by Andre Brisson of Embrun, while ranking in the 37th spot was Midlee Holsteins, and its owners Jim and Connie McDiarmid of Vernon. The 41st and 42nd spots went to Dundas County operations – Fresyl Farm (F and S Berseth) and Candu Farm (Fred and Deborah Dings), respectively.

Marvellane Farm, operated by Theo and Maria Nyentap of Marvelville, placed 11th in the province in the top herds for management score listings, receiving 945 of a possible 1,000 points.

Also finding themselves in the top 40 was Alexerin of Osgoode, operated by Ron and Todd Nixon, at 31st with a 920 score.

In the Holstein top publishable herds for average BCA by breed rankings, Topfarm Holsteins (Gerald and Janet Vanbokhorst of Osgoode) placed 14th.

In the top herds by breed Holstein division, Embrun's La Ferme Gillette had a cow, Marineau Talijah Shottle, place second in the mature category.

In the Holstein milk value category, Topfarm Holsteins finished 14th.

Herd Management

Listed are the top three farms in the region that place among the best for herd management.

Carleton County: First place – Marvellane Farm, Theo and Maria Nyentap, Marvelville, 945 total score. Second place – Alexerin Dairy, Ron and Todd Nixon, Osgoode, 920 score. Third place – Donevelyn Farms, Kenmore, 884 score.

Dundas County: First place – Wintergreen Farms, Carl Sears and Sons, South Mountain, 885 total score. Second place – Breteler Farms, Paul Breteler, Winchester, 858 total score. Third place – Nation Valley Farms, Jim and Carol Ann Byvelds, Chesterville, 855 total score.

Grenville County: First place – Gerann Holsteins, John and Dawn Wynands, Cardinal, 918 total score. Second place – Rideauside Farms, Charles and James Bennett, Kemptville, 873 total score. Third place – University of Guelph's Kemptville Campus, 850 total score.

Stormont County: First place – Ferme Lcm Quesnel, Marc Quesnel, Moose Creek, 844 total score. Second place – Kearnsvale, Mike Kearns, Berwick, 829 total score. Third place – Redlodge Farms, Armin and Monica Kagi, Finch, 827 total score.

Publishable Herd Listings

The following rank listings of the highest production herds for publishable milk record programs are based on the annual summary reports generated for each herd enrolled with CanWest DHI. The report is a detailed summary of production and BCA for milk, butterfat, and protein for eligible records that reached 305 days in milk, or terminated at or before 305 days in milk, between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2013.

Carleton County: First place – Topfarm Holsteins, Gerald and Janet Vanbokhorst, Osgoode, 287.3 BCA. Third place – Marvellane Farm, Theo and Maria Nyentap, Marvelville, 272.7 BCA. Fourth place – Alexerin Dairy, Ron and Todd Nixon, Osgoode, 270.7 BCA.

Dundas County: First place – Rosayre Farm, Ken and Shirley Rose, Mountain, 298 BCA. Second place – Breteler Farms, Paul Breteler, Winchester, 261.3 BCA. Third place – Verspeek Farms, Peter and Charmaine Verspeek, Winchester, 256.7 BCA.

Grenville County: First place – Gerann Holsteins, John and Dawn Wynands, Cardinal, 265.3 BCA. Second place – University of Guelph's Kemptville Campus, 254.3 BCA. Third place - Rideauside Farms, Charles and James Bennett, Kemptville, 248.3 BCA.

Stormont County: First place – Wenalt Holsteins, Crysler, 250.3 BCA. Second place – Bonvale Farms, Peter Beaudette, St. Andrews West, 242.7 BCA. Third place – Payneside Farm, Douglas Robinson, Finch, 242.7 BCA.

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Cow comfort is key to good production

by Tristan Emiry, OMAFRA

GUELPH

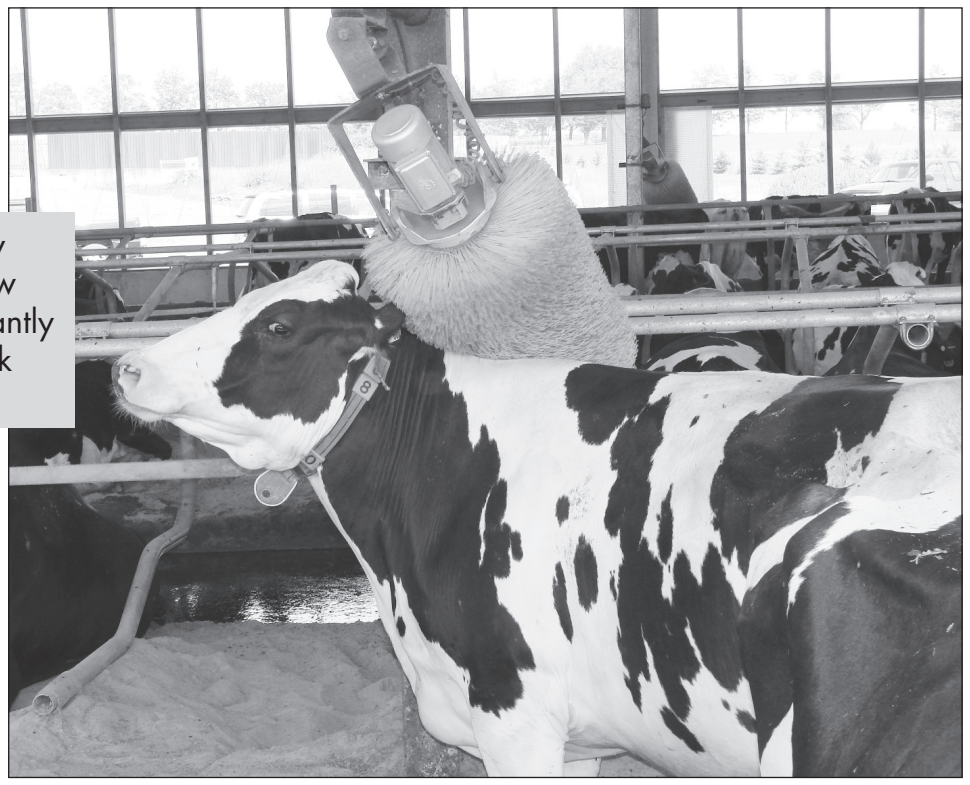
Cow comfort is becoming one of the most talked about issues in the dairy industry. Improving cow comfort is becoming extremely important to farmers because it can help producers to increase the production and longevity of their herds.

> Studies show increased cow comfort significantly increases milk production

Some ways dairy farmers are improving cow comfort include sand bedding, waterbed mattresses, automatic cow brushes, and rubber mats for flooring.

The use of sand bedding is increasing, and is a great way for farmers to improve cow comfort. The process reduces pressure on the parts of a cow's body that they put the most weight on. Barns with sand bedding see fewer hock injuries, and decreased hair loss on cow's knees. Sand bedding also significantly decreases the somatic cell count on dairy farms. Somatic cell count can lead to problems such as mastitis, which producers avidly work to avoid.

Another type of bedding that significantly increases cow comfort is a waterbed mattress. This product mimics sand bedding by reducing pressure on the points that a cow is lying on. Waterbed mattresses have a dual chamber system, which allows water to flow away from pressure points, easing the load when a cow is getting up or lying down.



This cow is pictured making use of an automated brush system.

Waterbeds have also been proven much easier to keep clean than traditional stall mattresses, and like sand bedding they show a significant decrease in swollen hocks or hair loss.

Another important part of improving cow comfort is improving flooring. Studies have shown that when given a choice, cows prefer to stand on rubber mats instead of concrete flooring. As a result an increasing number of farms are using rubber mats in alleyways and parlours to reduce slipping, and make walking around more comfortable. Pasturing cattle is another approach farmers use to ease pressure on cow's hooves.

Automatic brushes are commonly seen in dairy barns throughout Ontario. These brushes are usually cylindrical in shape and spin automatically when touched. They can roll back and forth over a cow's back or simply rotate against a cow's side as they brush up against it. Many barns have multiple brushes installed, and cows enjoy using them.

All of these innovations are helping farmers to improve their herd health and cow comfort. Studies show that increased cow comfort significantly increases milk production, and the dairy industry is responding.

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Forage options when winterkill strikes alfalfa

by Joel Bagg, OMAFRA

LINDSAY

It is sometimes difficult to know what to do when winterkill completely takes out your alfalfa stands or leaves them patchy and unhealthy.

There are many options that can be considered, depending on the calendar date, timing, urgency for feed, and forage yield and nutrient quality requirements.

If winterkill is identified early, the best option is usually to replace the winterkilled stand by seeding a new forage stand in a new field in the crop rotation. Growing corn in the winterkilled alfalfa field allows you to utilize the 110 kg/ha (100 lbs/ac) nitrogen credit, in addition to the 10 to 15 per cent yield benefit that corn receives following alfalfa in the rotation.

Stand assessment

Identifying alfalfa winterkill problems early in the spring allows for more options. It is important to walk and dig some plants to determine plant health and yield limitation. For details on what to look for, and how to make the decision to reseed or make the most of what you have, refer to "Assessing Forage Stands For Winter Survival" on www.fieldcropnews.com.

If you decide to keep a stand that has moderate stress from winterkill or fall cutting, allow plants to mature a bit longer before cutting. Delayed harvesting of stressed alfalfa will compromise forage quality, but allows plants to restore carbohydrate levels and will increase long-term stand survival.

Seed new forage elsewhere

In most cases, if winterkill is identified early, the best option is simply to replace the winterkilled stand by seeding a new forage stand in a new field in the crop rotation. Corn can follow the winterkilled alfalfa to take advantage of the nitrogen credit, and rotational benefit. A direct seeding can be done, or use a companion crop such as cereals or cereal-pea mixtures. Use good agronomic practices to maximize establishment year yields.

Optimum seeding dates are as soon as a seedbed can be prepared in the spring, ideally before May 10 for most of Southern Ontario.

Because of alfalfa auto toxicity, and the likely presence of soil-borne fungal alfalfa disease, do not reseed alfalfa into a winterkilled alfalfa stand, unless the winterkilled stand was seeded the preceding spring. Auto toxicity reduces the germination and growth of new alfalfa plants for the life of the stand. Auto toxicity compounds are not present the first year, so reseeding a failed new seeding is okay. Similarly, do not attempt to repair a thin alfalfa stand by inter-seeding alfalfa.

Applying nitrogen to grass

If an alfalfa stand is uniformly thin or weakened, but the grass content is good, the application of nitrogen can significantly increase yields, as well as the forage protein level. In situations where grass hay is preferred over alfalfa, nitrogen application easily pays for itself.

Healthy stands of productive cool-season grass species (such as orchard grass, brome grass, timothy, and tall fescue) can have a significant yield response to large amounts of nitrogen to optimize yield.

Research shows that one pound of nitrogen can yield an additional 25 to 40 pounds of hay. In other words, if we value hay at a very modest eight cents per pound, applying one pound of nitrogen worth 70 cents will result in an extra 25 to 40 pounds of hay worth $2 to $3.20.

As a general rule, 60 pounds of nitrogen should be applied to stands with one-third to one-half legume. For stands with less than one-third legume, nitrogen recommendations have been developed using growth response (yield) curves to various rates and nitrogen and hay price ratios.

Corn silage

Corn is typically the highest yielding emergency forage crop, with high digestible energy and quality. Growing corn silage can utilize the 110 kilogram nitrogen credit following winterkilled alfalfa, in addition to the 10 to 15 per cent yield benefit that corn receives following alfalfa in the rotation. A potential disadvantage of corn silage as an emergency forage is that it does not provide any immediate forage supply until harvested in the fall. As well, some farmers may not be set up to store or feed corn silage.

As an emergency forage crop, there are two options to managing corn silage. The best option is to kill (by burn down or plowing) the alfalfa stand, and then planting a full season hybrid at a normal time. This maximizes silage yield and nutrient quality. Double cropping by planting corn silage after the first-cut of a damaged alfalfa stand can provide some forage to fill short term needs, but this comes at the significant risk of reduced corn silage yield and quality (reduced grain/stover ratio).

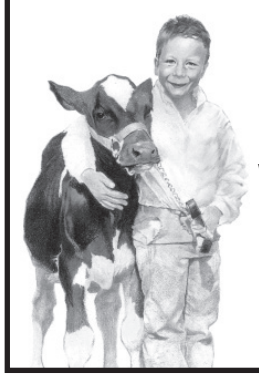
This approach can be very disappointing if spring growing conditions and early summer rainfall are insufficient. Similarly, no-tilling corn into an alfalfa sod rather than plowing is more risky without adequate rain.

Repair by no-tilling

Where winterkilled areas are large and patchy, some farmers prefer to attempt to repair these areas by no-tilling in red clover and/or Italian ryegrass.

Both are difficult to dry for hay, but can make quality haylage. However, the best option is often just to seed a new forage stand in a new field in the crop rotation. Do not interseed alfalfa into an alfalfa stand because of auto toxicity and disease, unless the stand was seeded the preceding year.

Ryegrass establishes quickly and grows well when seeded early, but does not do as well during hot, dry summer conditions. Because Italian ryegrass does not head and Westerwold annual ryegrass does, Italian ryegrass is higher forage quality, but more difficult to dry. Red clover establishes a bit faster than other legumes.



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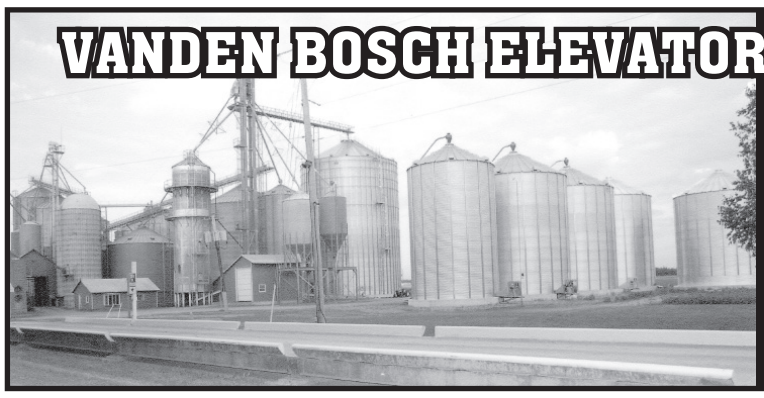

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Direct benefits with automated feeding systems

• The success in calf rearing primarily depends on feeding, management, and housing.

• This system's main advantage is reduced labour. However, you cannot substitute an automated feeding system for careful management.

• Base your decision to raise calves this way on an assessment of herd health status, and the ability of the person looking after the calves to closely monitor their wellbeing.

• Labour time required to feed the calves can be reduced to one-third using an automatic feeder instead of bucket feeding

• Change over from calves in hutches with bucket feeding to group housing with automatic feeding can reduce the labour requirement by almost 50 per cent.

• From a calves' perspective, the advantage of automatic feeders is the multiple feeding of always fresh prepared feed several times a day.

• Research indicates that calves can consume much higher volumes of milk, as much as 20 per cent of body weight, without negatively affecting health.

• A computerized calf feeder can take care of 15 to 20 calves

• The feed quantity per visit can automatically adapt to calves' development. Young calves receive more and smaller portions than older animals. The maximum quantity per visit can be limited too.

• Weaning takes place automatically and gradually according to age.

• If the automatic feeder is connected to a computer-controlled concentrate feeder, the calves can be weaned according to concentrate intake.

• Group housing does not remove the need for good management practices. Overlooking the calves, especially at a young age, can lead to troubles.



Automated feeders, such as this Rovibec PN-40 installed at Farside Farms near Berwick, are becoming a more popular option for area farmers. *Press File Photo*

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Summer seeding oats for forage

by Joel Bagg, OMAFRA forage specialist and Peter Johnson, OMAFRA cereals specialist

LINDSAY

Summer seeding annual forages can be a useful low-cost option for producing extra feed, either as an emergency forage or a regular double-crop option. These forages include cool-season cereals (oats, barley, triticale) and cereal-pea mixtures, as well as warm-season sorghums, sorghum-sudangrass and millets (pearl, Japanese).

Record acreages of these emergency annual forages were seeded last summer, and provided farmers with a "big save" in meeting their forage needs. Yields and nutrient quality were generally excellent, with high volumes of palatable quality baleage and silage made.

Oats have been the species most frequently used, as a low cost, low risk approach. They can be seeded in late-July or early-August following wheat and spring cereal harvest for an early-October harvest. Oats can make good feed when harvested at the correct stage of maturity and made into "oatlage" or baleage. Oats are more frost tolerant in the fall than sorghums, and can continue growth after some frost. The challenges can sometimes be lack of adequate moisture in August, and having dry enough weather in October for adequate wilting. Oats can be pastured if fence is available.

Oats, barley, triticale, peas?

Many find that oat forage is the most palatable of the cereals. Some producers avoid barley and triticale because of concerns about feeding the awns. Oats tend to out-yield barley when establishment conditions are poor. Triticale seed can be more expensive and difficult to source. Spring wheat generally yields poorly when summer seeded. At the same stage of maturity, oats, barley and triticale are very similar in feed quality. Of the cereals, oats are the most readily available, and usually give the best yields and returns for the dollars invested.

Peas can be added where higher forage quality is required. Cereal-pea mixtures are popular as a spring seeded companion crop. Peas added to cereals improve forage quality, but do not necessarily increase yields. Summer seeded peas dislike hot, dry conditions even more than cereals. Pea growth is often quite variable depending on moisture. Peas are more succulent and higher in moisture than oats, and can be very difficult to wilt in the fall. Pea mixtures may lie in the swath for an extended period of time with the risk of being rained on. Lush cereal, pea mixtures can be difficult to cut. Seed is more expensive. Despite these concerns, peas improve forage quality where meeting high nutritional requirements is a priority, such as for high producing dairy cows. If a cereal-pea mixture is sown to improve feed quality, at least 50 per cent should be peas, with a total seeding rate of about 110 pounds.

Cereals versus sorghums or millets?

Sorghums are much more tolerant of hot dry summer weather than cereals. In situations where seeding dates are very early (beginning of July) allowing for harvest maturity (50 to 60 days) before frost, sorghums will yield better than cereals. As cool season grasses, oats are not very tolerant of hot dry weather, and do not tiller and grow well in these conditions.

However, cereals planted after late July may start slowly but finish strongly in the fall, and can perform very well. Warm season grasses, such as sorghums, sorghum-sudans and millets do not grow well in cooler fall weather, and are very sensitive to frost. Once they are killed by that first frost, there is no further growth, which limits yield potential. Also, after frost, there is a very narrow harvest window before forage quality drops significantly. There are also some concerns about potential prussic acid poisoning with frosted sorghums, particularly if pasturing. Oats will outperform sorghums in cooler, wet fall weather, and are much more tolerant to hard frosts.

Seeding

Oats normally require about 60 days of growth following germination to reach the boot-stage. However, summer seeded oats tend to mature more slowly as days shorten in the fall, so may require an additional 10 days or so. Oats seeded in early August would typically be ready to harvest by the beginning of October.

Many prefer to no-till drill oats into wheat stubble to save time and moisture. Alternative seeding methods are to broadcast the oats and then incorporate them with a light disc or cultivator, or to seed into a prepared seedbed using a conventional drill. Summer seeded oats for forage are commonly seeded at about 65 to 100 pounds per acre.

High seeding rates have little impact on improving yields. Cereal-pea mixtures (minimum 50 per cent peas) are seeded at about 110 pounds.

Seeding after winter wheat is harvested can be a good opportunity, but competition from volunteer wheat can be a significant problem. Without vernalization, winter wheat will not form a stem in the fall to provide significant growth and yields are very limited. A lot of volunteer wheat can result when light grain goes through the combine, such as fusarium infection situations. One approach to reduce the problem is to do some light tillage behind the combine swath to encourage the grain to germinate. A burn down with glyphosate seven to 10 days later will remove much of the volunteer grain.

Varieties

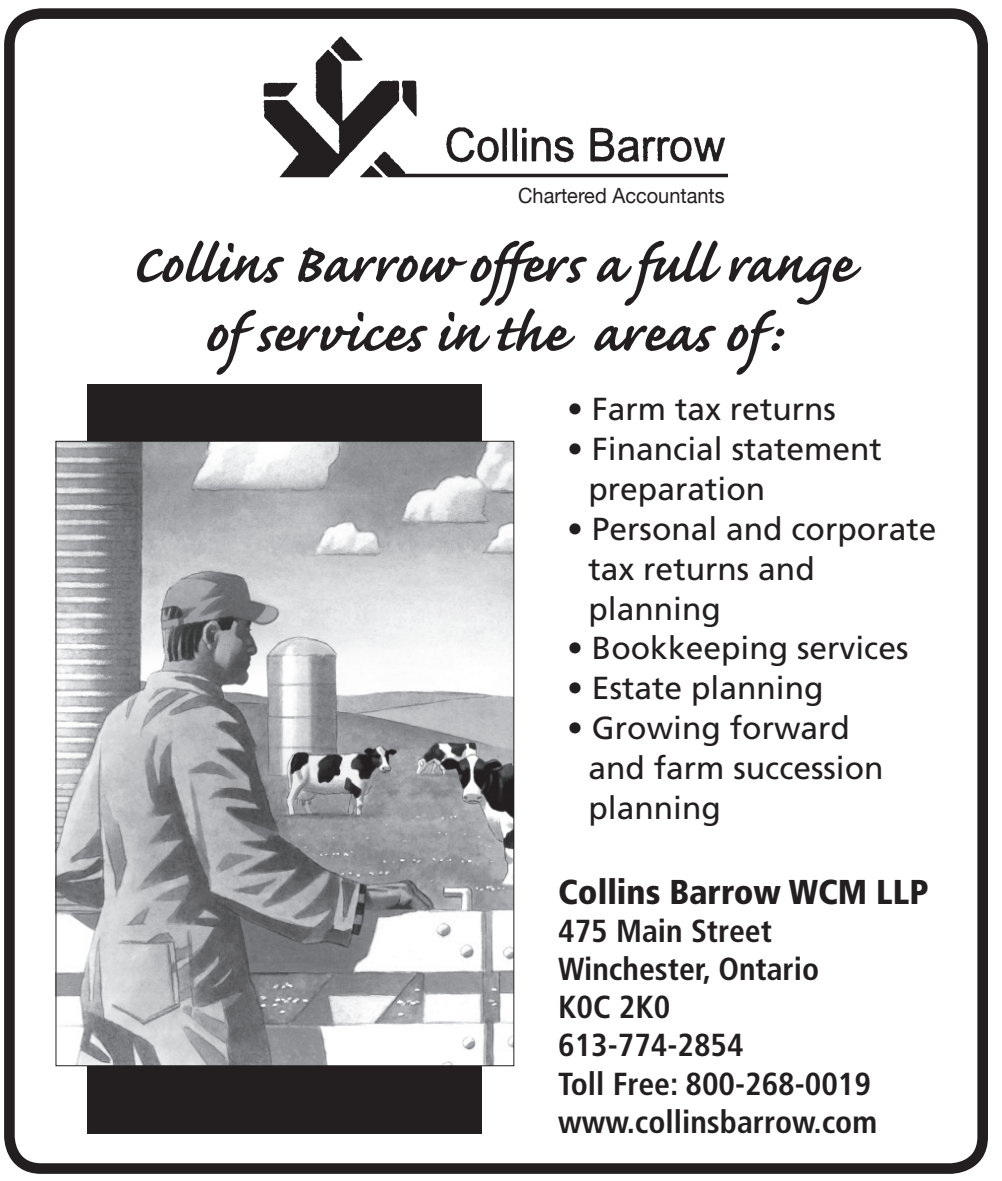
There are oat varieties specifically marketed as "forage" varieties. They are marketed as higher yielding, but tend to be later maturing, and with less disease resistance. Preliminary data suggests that western oat varieties respond differently in Ontario conditions and head very late, which results in lower yields, but higher nutrient quality. Ontario does not have a third-party forage oat variety testing program to evaluate variety performance and seed company claims. Many producers use double-cleaned or weed-free bin-run oats to minimize costs.

Other forage options

Wheat fields that had red clover underseeded as a cover crop are a good source of forage. Red clover makes excellent feed for high producing dairy cows. Summer seeded Italian ryegrass has also been used with good results, with excellent feed quality.

As the trend of high land costs and strong grain prices continues, and hay acreages continue to slip, many farmers are looking to summer seeded annual forages on a more regular basis as a method of producing additional forage in a double crop system







Precision dairy management – The age of technology

by Marlene Paibomesai, OMAFRA

GUELPH

Precision dairy management has gained much interest in recent years as new technologies, and new measurements hit the dairy market.

It provides a way that decisions on farm can be made through well-defined measurements obtained through technology. Precision management on dairy farms these days includes a number of gadgets and technologies that vary from automated feeding, activity monitors, in-line milk tests, rumination tags, and rumen boluses to robotic milking and seem to measure every aspect of the dairy cow's life.

For example, activity monitors can determine an individual cow's lying times and movement day to day in the herd measured by the number of steps taken. More recently accelerometers have been introduced into this market, and these not only measure movement within the herd, but also positioning of the cow in three-dimensional spaces.

Recent advancements in wireless transmission have added to the accuracy and range of these systems, and reliability in data recording with some of the latest technologies synching with your smartphone.

The benefits of this technology include improved reproduction management, decreased labour that is associated with other heat detection techniques, and the potential to identify lame or ill animals in the herd sooner. When deciding on what technologies to implement on your farm, it is of benefit to ask yourself what you spend most of your time doing, what challenges you are currently problem solving on farm, and how this technology will work with your current or future housing and management style.

Labour is short these days, and any time saved in labour will allow you more time to better manage your herd and can prove to be beneficial for your bottom line.

As these technologies continue grow in precision dairy management market there might be more questions than answers as to how best to use these technologies on farm.

By taking the time to get to know your system and how the information is presented will make you better equipped in using it as a management tool.



Activity monitors mounted either on the neck or leg provides the producer with information about movement of that cow within the herd.

Ideas for working around poor forage quality

by Mario S. Mongeon, OMAFRA livestock specialist

ALFRED

Here are a series of management tips for times when forage quality is less than optimal:

- Have realistic expectations. Low quality forages are not the ideal ingredients of a dairy ration.
- Fine tune rations, and use the best forages for the cows in early lactation.
- Get an analysis for every batch of forage, and measure forage dry matter content regularly.
- Have your nutritionist balance rations for all groups.
- Select a type of grain that will best fit the rate of digestibility of the main forage. This may not be the type of grain you have on the farm. Consider the option of buying. Particle size (grinding) of the grain is another fine tuning tool.
- Investigate the economic value of adding protected fat, enzymes, and additives to the dairy ration.
- Focus on profitability, not just milk production levels.
- Since there is a limit to what improving nutrition can do, focus on other strategies as well. Buying or keeping a few extra animals may do more good than overfeeding concentrate to the milking herd to increase milk production. Overfeeding concentrate can lead to several health problems.
- Instead of getting rid of open cows, keep them as long as they produce enough milk to justify staying in the herd, given that they have no other significant problems.
- Maintaining 16 hours of light and eight hours of darkness in the barn can help in boosting production.
- Evaluate and correct any environmental problems. Cow comfort, bunk space, and water availability are all aspects that can affect milk production as well.

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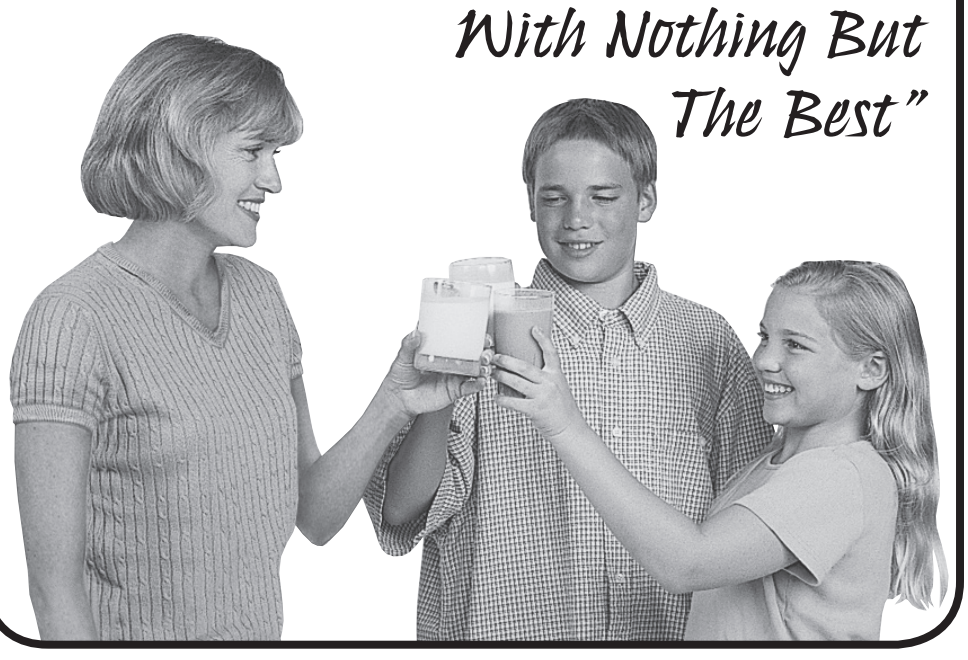

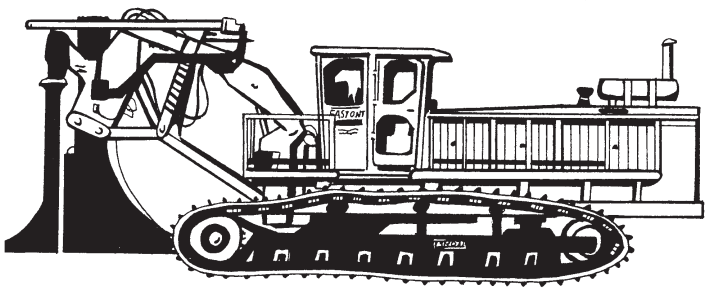

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Sexed semen: Getting toward male or female

by Mario S. Mongeon, OMAFRA livestock specialist

ALFRED

In 1989, the first live offspring was born from a dairy animal inseminated with sorted semen. Costly and slow, the sex-sorting technology took another 10 years to be perfected and gain commercial acceptance.

The sorting process is known as flow cytometry. This technology is based on the different physical properties of the X (female) and Y (male) chromosomes in the sperm cells. The X chromosome is larger than the Y chromosome thus bearing more DNA (genetic material).

> Using sexed semen can be an effective method to increase herd size from within

A special dye is added to the semen that makes the DNA visible to the sorting machine's electronic sensors. The larger chromosome appear "brighter" to the sensors. The "bright" and the "dim" sperm cells will be assigned with a different electrical charge, either positive or negative as they flow in a single line through the machine. This electrical charge will allow separation in two different vials by an electrostatic process.

Sperm sorting is not completely accurate. There is a certain percentage (5 to 15 per cent) of Y (male) bearing sperm cells that will end up with the X (female) bearing cells concentrate after sorting. The imperfect sorting process accounts for the 10 per cent odds of getting a male calf from an insemination performed using sexed semen.

Why use sex semen?

There are three main reasons why a dairy producer would want to use sexed semen as part of the farm's breeding program. In a situation where a significant herd expansion is planned, using sexed semen can be an effective method to increase herd size from within. The second reason would be the desire to increase the number of heifers born from superior cows. Lastly, using sexed semen significantly reduces the incidence of difficult birth. Reductions of dystocia cases of 28 per cent for heifers and 64 per cent for cows have been reported when sexed semen was used, especially for twin births. Stillbirths also were less frequent for twins when sexed semen was used.

Conception rates conundrum

Conception rates achievable with conventional artificial insemination vary greatly amongst farms. Factors such as parity, age of the animal, body condition, climatic conditions, and accurate heat detection are known to significantly influence the conception rate.

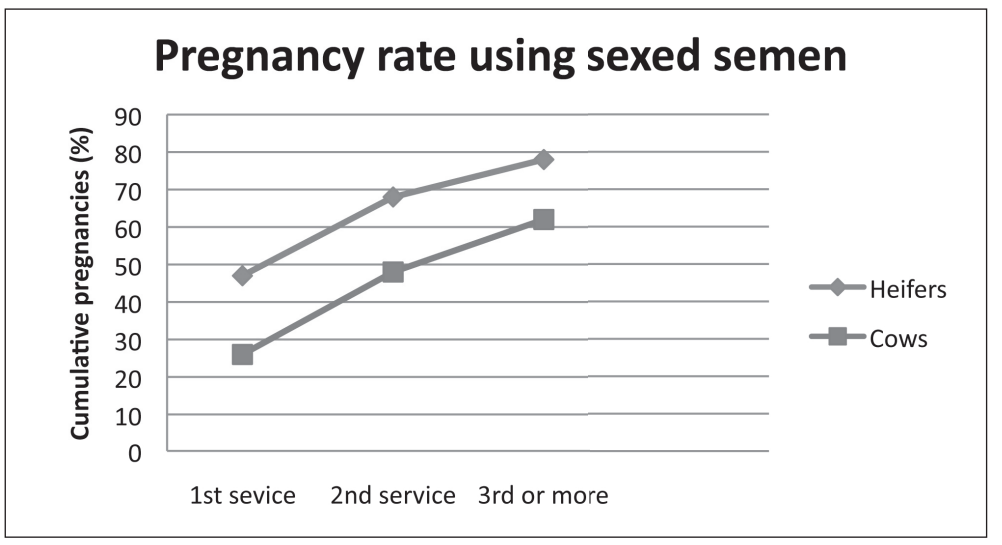
Heifers have a tendency to achieve better conception rates than cows although as the age of heifer at breeding increases, conception rate tends to decrease. During the warmer months of the year, when conditions of heat stress prevail, conception rates also tend to decrease.

Several studies conducted in various parts of the world demonstrated that the conception rates are greater with conventional semen than they are when sexed semen is used. For example, in an American study published in 2010, mean conception rates for heifers was 26 per cent greater than cows for conventional semen. For sexed semen, mean conception rate for heifers was 14 per cent greater than for cows (as seen in Graph 1).

The reasons behind the reduction of fertility observed when sexed semen is used are still to be clarified. Factors associated with the sorting process or the lower concentration of sperm cells in the sexed semen straw are amongst the potential culprits.

Another aspect highlighted in this project is the important variation in conception rate attributed solely to insemination sire. Their findings emphasize the differences between the inherent fertility of individual bulls, as well as potential differences in the ability of an individual bull's semen to withstand sorting.

Furthermore, individual bulls may differ in the ease with which their sperm is sexed and thus may yield sexed straws of greater purity. No association between semen sorting and twining rate was noted although they found that twining rate was



positively influenced by increasing heifer weight at breeding.

A theory, partly validated by some studies, suggests that the ovum could have a role in sex allocation. For example, if an ovum is produced, each cycle, already programmed to be receptive to an X or Y sperm, exposure to the wrong type of sperm cell would result in failure to fertilize or to develop.

In most mammals, including cattle, males benefit more than females from the ability of the mother to invest more resources in their offspring. In situations where conditions are optimal (plentiful food, good environment), and could result in increased offspring size, it seems that male offspring are more likely. If resources are sub-optimal and offspring size could be reduced, the likelihood of a female being born increases.

A research project conducted in New Zealand and published in 2006 investigated the influence of body condition score on the sex ratio. They analyzed data collected throughout an 18 year period. They found that the odds of a male calf increased in the following situations: cows that were thinner at calving, 2.5 body condition score (BCS) versus; cows that lost least BCS (or gained most BCS) between calving and conception; or cows that lost BCS at a slower rate (or gained BCS at a faster rate) between calving and conception.

The odds of the birth of a bull calf were 1.85 times greater than that of a female calf when cows gained one BCS unit from calving to conception. The researchers concluded that there is evidence for a maternal adjustment around the time of conception in sex ratio at birth in dairy cattle.

Since conception rate for sexed semen breeding is affected negatively by sexing technology, and because only 2.6 sexed semen services are needed per pregnancy for heifers compared with four for cows, sexed semen should be used primarily for heifer breeding because of financial considerations.

Furthermore, sexed straws should be reserved for the first and second services because the significant reduction in conception rate associated with increased service number.

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Wide swath haylage requires innovation

by Joel Bagg, OMAFRA

LINDSAY

Wide swath haylage to achieve "haylage in a day," and improve forage quality is a management practice that more dairy farmers in Ontario are adopting.

This is contrary to the more traditional practice of using the mower-conditioner to place the swath in a narrow windrow for a day or two of wilting, and then chop directly. Wide swath haylage requires some innovation and significant changes in both equipment and management, but research indicates that improvements in forage quality can be quite impressive.

Respiration losses

Rapid wilting after cutting is critical to minimize the often significant respiration losses of sugars in high quality haylage. This is especially true for higher yielding first-cuts.

Plant respiration continues after cutting to below 60 to 65 per cent dry matter when the cells actually die. Respiration converts stored carbohydrates (starch and sugar) to carbon dioxide, heat and moisture, and causes dry matter losses and increased fibre per cent. Forage that is higher in the soluble carbohydrates will have greater digestible energy, but also can provide more readily fermentable substrate to lactic acid bacteria resulting in better haylage fermentation. The longer the wilting period in the field, the greater the respiration losses (less sugars), and the lower the forage quality.

Wide swaths

Wider swaths dry faster, so adjusting the mower to leave as wide a swath as possible makes sense. Research by Tom Kilcer, from Cornell University Extension, indicates that wide swath width (85 per cent of cutter-bar width) and sunlight (cutting in the morning) are the keys to fast wilting for haylage high in digestible energy and improved fermentation. Freshly cut forage doesn't know it's dead yet. Carbohydrates gained from photosynthesis in a wide swath exposed to sunlight typically exceeded the respiration losses.

The Cornell research indicates that wide swaths can significantly improve forage quality, consistency and "milk-per-ton" of haylage. Milk per ton was improved by 300 pounds. As a valuable bonus, haylage in a day also reduces the risk of rain damage.

Equipment changes and modifications

Most mower conditioners have an easy swath width adjustment. Dr Ron Schuler (extension engineer at the University of Wisconsin) reports that the average maximum swath width on the North American market is 61.4 per cent of the cut width, with a range of 28 to 87 per cent. Self-propelled widths are usually narrower. Swath width percentage should be a consideration when purchasing a new mower – the wider the better.

Rather than purchase a new mower right away that will enable a wide swath, some haylage producers have used a tedder as a temporary measure to widen the swath without the additional investment.

Of course, wide swaths will likely require that the swaths be moved and narrowed for chopping. This is an obstacle preventing many from making wide swath haylage. Some are adopting the use of windrow mergers that use a pickup and belt (similar to an inverter, but wider) rather than rakes, in order to reduce the risk of picking up rocks, clostridia bacteria and soil (ash). A rock in the chopper is a huge problem to be avoided. Combining two or more windrows into one with a merger creates the need for an extra field operation, but it also increases chopper capacity and speed. Moving an "almost ready" swath with a merger also speeds wilting. A merger is cheaper and faster to run than a harvester.

There is some concern about driving on a wide swath. The Cornell research indicates that in a wide swath situation, driving on the cut swath with the tractor is not an issue that significantly affects drying. However, there may be some potential for soil contamination that adversely affects fermentation, particularly in wet field conditions. Tractor tires can be set as wide as possible.

Before purchasing wide swath haylage equipment, it is important to consider the compatibility of the mower (or mower-conditioner) swath width, merger pick-up width, and the forage harvester pick-up width.

Impact of conditioning on wilting

Increasing the swath width is often limited by the width of the conditioner on the mower. So if I have to forego conditioning to widen the swath, doesn't that negate any advantage of having a wide swath? According to the Cornell research, conditioning actually reduced wilting speed in wide swaths at haylage moisture levels by disrupting the capillary flow and evapotranspiration of moisture through the stems to the stomata (pores) in the leaves.

In a narrow dense windrow the stomata close, so conditioning is an important drying mechanism. On the other hand, if you have a wide swath and sunlight to keep the stomata open, the Cornell research indicates you could forego conditioning in a haylage system.

Conditioning is unquestionably essential when the stomata close when moistures fall below 60 to 65 per cent during dry hay making. Conditioning stems is extremely important at lower moistures in making dry hay. Strategies for wilting silage are quite different than dry hay making, but wide swaths are advantageous for both.

Morning or late in the day?

Stomata are generally open during the day and closed at night (or on the bottom of a tight swath). A wide swath maximizes exposure to sunlight, which keeps the stomata open and maximizes exposure to solar radiation (heat and lower humidity). Contrary to some western U.S. research, in conditions similar to Ontario with high humidity and warm nights, respiration losses during the night exceed the extra sugars expected by cutting late in the day.

Bottom line

Bottom line for wide swath haylage – leave the swath as wide as possible by adjusting the mower, and cut in the morning. The full adoption of wide swath haylage will require some machinery innovation and modification on the part of forage equipment companies and farmers. In the mean time, open your mower as wide as practical.

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Dry cows are susceptible to heat stress, too

by Mario S. Mongeon, OMAFRA livestock specialist

ALFRED

The dry period in dairy cattle is critical in many ways and optimum conditions during the dry period will influence positively the outcome of the subsequent lactation.

During the dry period, the mammary system undergoes many changes. Tissue grows and extensive cell turnover takes place. This process is required to compensate for the cell loss that took place during the previous lactation. The extent of the regeneration process dictates the number of milk producing cells, as well as their production capacity. The absence of a dry period is associated with decreased milk production in the subsequent lactation since the mammary gland regeneration process is altered.

Environmental factors, such as photoperiod and temperature, have been demonstrated to affect subsequent lactation as well. For example, cows exposed to short-day photoperiod during the dry period produce more milk and have improved immune function than similar animals dried-off under long-day photoperiod.

Temperature is another important environmental factor. Dairy cows prefer cool temperatures. As the temperature gets warmer, especially if the relative humidity is high, signs of heat stress may start to show up, including lower dry matter intake and reduced milk production for lactating animals.

Dry cows can be negatively affected by warm temperatures as well, and this is a less known fact. Furthermore, not only will dry cows exhibit signs of heat stress during the warm spell, but the effects may extend well into the following lactation.

From May to November of 2009 a study involving dry cows was conducted at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The objective of the project was to evaluate the effect of heat stress on the development of the mammary gland of dairy cows. Cows in late lactation were dried off about 46 days before the expected calving date, separated into two groups statistically similar, exposed to a fixed photoperiod of 10 hours of darkness, fed the same ration and housed in the same barn.

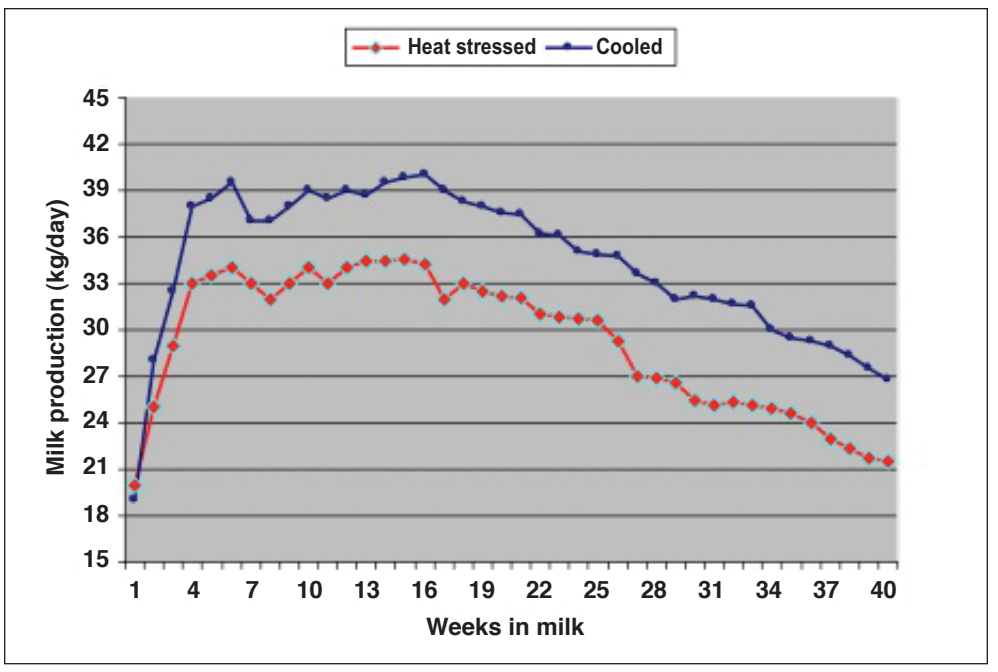

FIGURE 1
Lactation curves for two groups of dairy cows following exposition to heat stress or cooling during the dry period.

The only difference between the two dry cow groups was exposure to heat stress. The heat stressed group was not provided with means to mitigate the effect of heat, whereas the area of the barn housing the other group of dry cows was equipped with fans and sprinklers that would automatically turn on if the ambient temperature exceeded 21.1 degrees Celsius. The sprinklers, when activated, were on for 1.5 minutes every six minutes. Various data was collected during the dry period, as well as the following lactation for the first 40 weeks.

During the dry period, cows exposed to cooling had a lower body temperature as well as a lower respiration rate compared to cows in heat stress. Furthermore, heat stressed dry cows had a shorter gestation length and consequently a shorter dry period. The calves from the cooled dry cows were heavier than those from cows exposed to heat stress.

During the first 40 weeks of lactation following the experimental treatment, cows that were exposed to heat stress during the dry period produced on average five kilograms of milk per day less than the cows exposed to cooling. In terms of milk yield during the 40 weeks, this represents 1400 litres of milk, and more than $1,000 at current milk prices in Ontario.

The analysis of udder tissues sampled during the study provides evidence that heat stress during the dry period alters cell proliferation in the udder. Fewer secretory cells are produced, and this in turn reduces milk yield capacity.

EFFECT OF HEAT STRESS ON DRY COWS:

- Decreased milk production in the following lactation
- Decreased milk solid yields
- Negatively affect liver functions in early lactation
- Decreased immune functions during the transition period

This study emphasizes the necessity to take measures to reduce the impact of heat stress on cows. When temperatures rise above the animal's comfort zone during the dry period, it could compromise the development of the mammary system, which decreases milk production in the following lactation.

During the summer months, several means are available to mitigate the effects of warmer temperatures. Providing plenty of drinking water and making it easily available for the dry cows is an excellent first step. Access to shade, good ventilation and air movement are other simple means to reduce the impact of heat on the herd.

Another method that can be used to reduce the effect of heat on the animals is to use water to cool them. Sprinkler or misting systems are fairly common in large herds in New Zealand and in the U.S.

Most of the time, sprinkler systems are associated with fans. The cooling effect of the water is enhanced by the evaporation induced by the fans. These systems are usually installed where cows congregate or above the animals at the feed bunk.



Winchester BMR caters to dairy farmers

WINCHESTER

Everything at Winchester BMR revolves around service to the customer, including what makes its way to the County Road 38 store's inventory.

It is a "one stop" shopping experience, owner Ken Boje said.

"We're a full-line store," he added, highlighting the shop's catalogue of products, which includes lumber, hardware, building supplies, housewares, plumbing, electrical, flooring, garden centre, seasonal products, painting, stove and fireplace, kitchen and bathroom, window and door, and agriculture.

In fact, Boje stocks an entire "agrizone" section, which continues to grow, as customer needs and requests come in.

"As we've gone along, we've added," Boje said.

In terms of dairy farmer needs, Boje currently stocks a variety of materials and brand names, including teat dips, washes, fine shavings, twine, foot wraps, halters, salt and mineral licks, water bowls, buckets, calf shelters, fencing, and more.

Boje said he keeps key items in stock, but can order anything BMR holds in its warehouse, and have it in the store within the week. Customers can search online (www.bmr.co) and follow-up in store with the request.

As well, Boje deals with outside suppliers, and will bring in special request items if the need arises. An example of this situation is a special request from a few of Boje's dairy customers for the Ecolab brand of teat dips. For this, Boje deals directly with the supplier to bring the product into the Winchester store for his clients.

"We're in a very strong agricultural centre," Boje said.



Ken Boje can direct order requested items from the supplier/ manufacturer, if needed, as he has done with these Ecolab teat dips.





The County Road 38 location carries a variety of brands of silage wrap, baler twine, and shavings, both fine and coarse.

Press Photos – Casselman





Winchester BMR carries a large variety of supplies for dairy farming, including wash, foot wraps, buckets, salt and mineral licks, halters, and more.

The store also stocks a variety of tools and accessories for other agricultural sectors, including poultry, equestrian, the maple industry, and more. As well, there is a full line of work clothing and footwear.

To make the shopping experience even more convenient, Boje offers bulk-buying options for some items, and can deliver products to the home, farm, or business.



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Which one to keep?

Deciding on the heifer to stay, and the one to go

by Mario S. Mongeon, OMAFRA livestock specialist

ALFRED

When industry professionals meet to discuss calf and heifer management, there is usually consensus among the group that many dairy producers invest financial and labour resources into raising too many replacement heifers.

In fact, when looking at the last census, one realizes that pretty much every heifer born in Ontario gets raised. Unless the herd size is increasing and in order for heifers to be milked, one needs to make room for these new comers and older cows might get pushed out the barn prematurely.

Herd Turnover Rate is an indicator of how many animals leave the herd throughout a year, and is calculated by dividing the number of culled animals in a year by the average herd size for that period. For example, a Herd Turnover Rate of 33 per cent implies that one-third of the production herd is replaced every year. The consensus in dairy literature is that lower annual herd turnover rates are more profitable, with optimal turnover rates around 25 to 30 per cent.

According to CanWest Dairy Herd Improvement reports, the 2011 average provincial herd turnover rate was 39 per cent in Ontario. There is room for improvement.

An easy way to get around the trap of sending good cows on a truck ride too early is to limit the number of heifers raised on the farm. Several factors will affect the number of replacement animals required. These include: age at first calving, herd turnover rate, and calf and heifer mortality rates. The general idea is to raise only the number of animals required to maintain a constant herd size. In order to achieve this, a selection strategy needs to be developed and implemented, but selection and culling is a balancing act between economics, milk production, and genetic progress.

In order to achieve a fast genetic gain, the selection needs to be more intense. As the selection intensity increases, only the best cows and heifers will be selected to raise replacement animals and only the best bulls will be used as sires for replacement heifers.

The Lifetime Profit Index (LPI) data includes a production, as well as a conformation component and can be a useful tool to rank all the animals in a herd. The accuracy of the LPI is greater for cows with actual records. For calves and heifers, the LPI value will be based on the combined LPI value of the parents. For heifers, genomics can be a welcome tool to improve the precision of selection as information available can be somewhat limited. Genomic testing shortly after birth allows for a more accurate selection of best replacements, better mating decisions for heifers and early culling of poorer heifers.

If all of the LPI data for each dairy animal in the province were to be used to create a graph, it would look like Figure 1.

The average animal would have a LPI ranking of 50. This means that it is the average animal for the group. Animals above the 50 percentile mark are then above average.

The same applies for the ranking of animals in a specific herd. As you select the cows and heifers with the highest LPI or percentile ranking, the selection intensity increases. If all the animals in the herd are used to raise replacements, there is very little selection if any and little or no genetic progress.

On the other hand, if the poorest LPI animals in the herd *are not used* to raise replacements, there is a moderate level of selection and moderate genetic progress. Finally, if only the animals with LPI above average in the herd are used to raise replacements, there is a higher level of selection and greater genetic progress.

To set up a selection strategy in your herd, have a close look at your cows and heifers. First, make up a list and rank them according to their genetic potential from best to worst using LPI. You then want to divide your list into three groups – the top group, with LPI above herd average; the average group; and the tail group with LPI below average. Other factors might be used to move cows from one group to another such as temperament, longevity, or other characteristics not accounted for by the LPI index

You should aim to breed the top group with the best bull possible. This is where most of your heifers should come from. If you need more heifers, select parents from the average group. In order to optimize genetic gain, you should avoid raising heifers originating from the tail group.

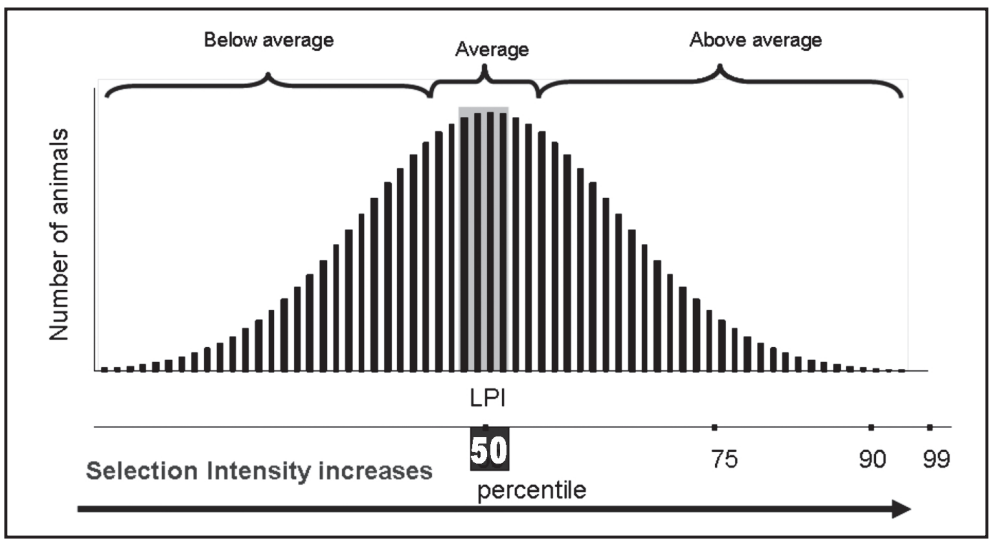
When the selected animals are bred, the decision as to whether to keep the calf should already be made. Of course, health status of the new born calves, as well as other factors may change your decision.

If you want to get the best out of the top group of animals, you may want to use sexed semen on the very best individuals in your herd. Using sexed semen can shift the sex ratio of live calves from the standard 50-50



FIGURE 1

- What is your Herd Turnover Rate? What should it be?
- Limit the number of heifers raised on your farm
- Raise only the best ones, it makes ecomonic sense
- Define your objections and develop a selection strategy
- Use new tools such as sexed semen and genomics wisely to improve your strategy



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What to consider when constructing a new barn

by Tanya Wilson, OMAFRA

GUELPH

Dairy farmers do an excellent job of staying current, and up to date with farming practices.

One situation where it pays to take the time to investigate new options is when it comes to designing or renovating a dairy barn. Dairy farmers usually choose between either a free-stall or tie-stall design, often depending on the size of their operation.

Both barn styles come with advantages and disadvantages, with tie-stall barns the most common housing system in Ontario and they are still widely used throughout the world. Despite some criticisms because they limit cows' movement, they can make for an excellent and easily run facility, when designed properly.

Throughout many decades, cow breeding has led to an increase in the size of the average dairy cow, which means their spatial requirements have changed. Older style tie-stall barns tend to have shorter stalls that can cause the cattle to stand for longer periods of time, as well as stand diagonally or with their feet in the gutter. Unusual postures or standing and lying patterns can have effects on cow cleanliness and comfort. Recommended stall design and dimensions are available from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs.

Proper stabling is also necessary to ensure that the benefits of correct tie-stall dimensions are achieved. One example is the position of the head rail. If it is located too low, there is the potential for changes to a cow's posture or for neck problems to develop throughout time. These issues can be reduced by increasing the height, which can also allow cows to maintain a cleaner udder as well. A midrange height of 99 to 114 centimetres is considered the best to significantly minimize neck problems compared to low (71 to 96 centimetres), and high (116 to 132 centimetre) rail heights.

Other benefits in terms of cow comfort in tie-stall barns can be achieved with adjustments to the length of the tie chain. As length increases, it has been shown to decrease the amount of hock injuries, as well as increase cow cleanliness.

Using geotextile mattresses in tie-stalls is a growing trend and they provide a significant amount of comfort, particularly when deeply bedded with straw or similar materials.

Some countries, such as Norway and Sweden, have begun to phase out the use of tie-stalls barns, and this has been discussed by some Canadian dairy researchers as a possibility at some point in the future.

When contemplating a new, or redesigning an existing facility, it is important to explore and compare all the options available and to choose what will best suit your needs. A good way to do this is to visit as many dairy facilities as you can before final decisions are made.

Talk with other producers and farm builders. When visiting other barns, make notes and take lots of pictures as you go to help you remember things you liked, or disliked, about other barns to ensure you and your cows get the best facility possible.

An innovative genetic tool for the improvement of dairy cow health

by Marlene Paibomesai, OMAFRA

GUELPH

Mastitis, metritis, ketosis, and retained placenta are economically important diseases in the Ontario dairy industry representing significant losses financially and increased effects on animal welfare and productivity.

A new genetic tool allows for the identification of animals that display a more robust immune response, which has been associated with a decrease in disease incident on farm.

Throughout the past two decades, researchers at the University of Guelph have been working toward developing a tool that makes breeding for multiple health traits a possibility.

High Immune Response (HIR) offers a promising future for the selection of healthier, more productive cows with improved longevity within the herd. This two-week test, which requires three farm visits, ranks animals based upon their immune response to test antigens that have been patented by the University of Guelph.

Moderate heritability (0.25) for immune response traits makes it feasible to breed cows for improved immune response. In short, there have been many benefits associated with cows identified with enhanced immune response traits, including lower disease occurrences with lower severity leading to reduction in treatment and production of high quality colostrums for potential improvement in calf health from day one.

Research at a representative herd (700 cows) has shown that cows identified as high immune responders have reduction in disease occurrences, including 27 per cent less mastitis cases, 17 per cent less metritis, and 32 per cent less retained placenta.

Decrease in disease occurrence on the farm means a better bottom line for you the producer and overall improved longevity in your herd.

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Cheese Twists



Ingredients

8 oz (240 g) puff pastry dough
1 egg, beaten
2 cups (500 ml) favourite shredded Canadian Cheese
Paprika

Preparation instructions

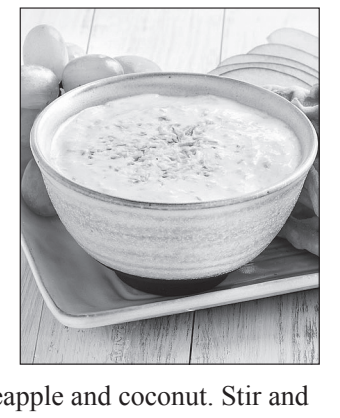
Preheat oven to 400 °F (200 °C). Line one baking sheet with parchment paper.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out puff pastry into a 10 inch square. Brush with beaten egg. Sprinkle with your favourite shredded Canadian cheese and paprika. Cut into strips one inch wide. Hold ends of strip and twist. Place on baking sheet. Bake 10 to 15 minutes, or until puffed and lightly browned. Cool.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Pina Colada Dip



Ingredients

2 tbsp (30 ml) grated coconut unsweetened
½ cup (125 ml) Canadian Mascarpone
½ cup (125 ml) thick plain yogurt (Greek-style)
2 tbsp (30 ml) sugar
½ cup (125 ml) crushed pineapple

Preparation instructions

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Spread coconut out in an oven-safe dish and bake for five minutes. Remove from oven and let cool.

In a blender, mix the Mascarpone, yogurt and sugar until smooth. Pour into a bowl and add pineapple and coconut. Stir and serve with fresh fruit, muffins, waffles or pancakes.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

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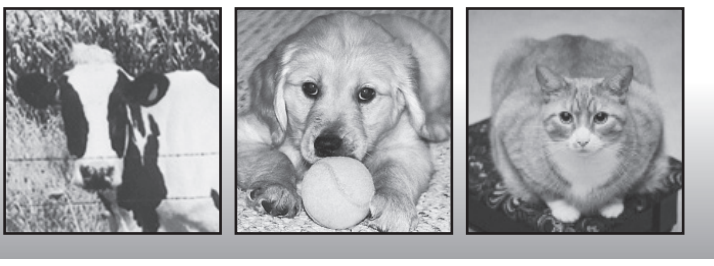

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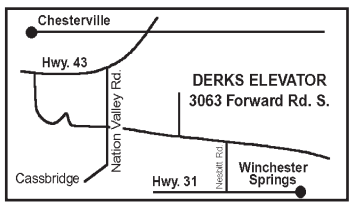

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Dulce de Leche Ice Cream



Ingredients

2 cups half-and-half or milk
4 large egg yolks
½ cup sugar
12 ounces butterscotch chips, divided
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preparation instructions

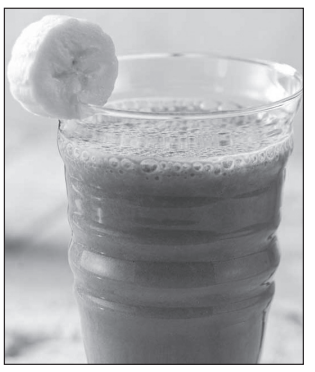
Prepare a large bowl or pan of ice water.

In the top of a double boiler, heat the half-and-half over simmering water until steaming. In a bowl, whisk the egg yolks until blended, then whisk in the sugar. Whisk in about half of the hot half-and-half and pour the yolk mixture into the pan of half-and-half. Stir with a silicone spatula or spoon and cook over simmering water for about eight minutes. Stir in one cup of the chips and continue stirring until blended in and the custard coats the back of the spatula, about two minutes more. Immediately place the custard pan in the ice bath and stir the custard occasionally until it cools to room temperature. Transfer to a container and stir in the cream and vanilla. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, about three hours.

Freeze in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. When the ice cream is almost frozen, add the remaining one cup chips and churn until blended in, about 15 seconds more. Transfer to a container, cover and freeze until firm, about two hours. Makes about one quart.

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Dark Chocolate Banana Fruit Shake



Ingredients

1 frozen ripe banana, broken into chunks
2 tsp (10 ml) unsweetened cocoa powder
2 cups (500 ml) chocolate milk
½ tsp (2 ml) vanilla extract

Preparation instructions

In a blender, purée frozen ripe banana, cocoa powder, chocolate milk and vanilla until smooth. Pour into chilled glasses and serve immediately.

Tips

For the best flavour, use ripe bananas that are yellow with brown spots. As they ripen, peel them, then seal in a freezer bag and store in the freezer to make these shakes.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Easy Cauliflower Cheddar Soup

Ingredients

9 cups (2.25 l) chopped cauliflower, (about 2 lbs/1 kg)
2 stalks celery, diced
1 onion, chopped
3 potatoes, peeled and diced
2 tsp (10 ml) minced garlic
Pepper
2 cups (500 ml) reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 cup (250 ml) water
2 tbsp (30 ml) all-purpose flour
2 ½ cups (625 ml) milk
Ground nutmeg
1 ½ cups (375) shredded Canadian cheddar cheese, divided
¼ tsp (1 ml) salt, (approx.)



Preparation instructions

In a large pot, combine cauliflower, celery, onion, potatoes, garlic, pepper to taste, chicken broth and water; cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and boil gently for 15 to 20 min or until vegetables are soft.

Whisk flour into milk; pour into pot with nutmeg to taste. Cook, stirring, for about three minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from heat.

Using an immersion blender or transferring in batches to an upright blender, purée until smooth.

Return to pot, if necessary. Heat over medium heat, stirring often, for about five minutes or until bubbling. Remove from heat and stir in one cup (250 ml) of the cheese until melted. Season with pepper and up to ¼ tsp (1 ml) salt. Ladle into warm bowls and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Tips

To save time, you can often buy pre-cut cauliflower in bags in the produce department of the supermarket

Add one to two large carrots, chopped, with the cauliflower in step 1.

Use a Canadian old or extra-old cheddar cheese or use Canadian gouda or Swiss cheese in place of the cheddar. *Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada*

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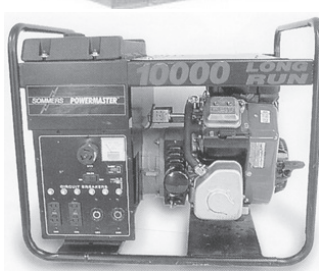

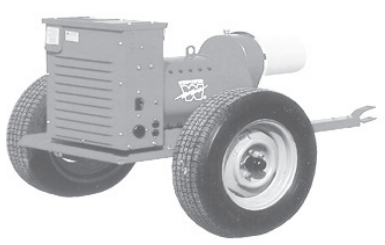

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Blackberry Crème Brûlée

A burst of berries makes this classic, creamy custard dessert absolutely sublime! They can be made ahead for easy entertaining – get out your blow torch for the best brûlée effect and to dazzle your guests.



Ingredients

2 cups (500 ml) 10% half-and-half or 18% table cream
½ cup (125 ml) granulated sugar, divided
2 eggs
2 egg yolks
2 tsp (10 ml) vanilla
1 ½ cups (375 ml) fresh blackberries or raspberries

Topping:
⅓ cup (75 ml) granulated sugar (approx.)

Preparation instructions

Preheat oven to 325°F (160°C).

In a saucepan, combine cream and half of the sugar; heat over medium heat until steaming. In a heatproof bowl, whisk together remaining sugar, eggs and egg yolks until pale. Gradually whisk in heated Cream mixture in a slow steady stream; whisk in vanilla

Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a liquid measuring cup with a pouring spout. Sprinkle blackberries evenly in bottom of six 3/4-cup (175 mL) or eight ½-cup (125 ml) ramekins or crème brûlée dishes. Pour cream mixture evenly over top.

Set ramekins in a roasting pan place pan in oven. Pour in enough boiling water to come three-quarters up sides of ramekins. Bake for 35 to 40 min until tops are firm and centre is still slightly jiggly. Let cool on rack. Cover loosely. Refrigerate for about two hours, until chilled, or for up to two days.

Topping: Just before serving, preheat broiler. Blot tops of custards dry with paper towel. Sprinkle evenly with a thin layer of sugar, adding more if required. Broil on a baking sheet, rotating ramekins as necessary, or use a torch until sugar is bubbling and caramelized. Let cool for three minutes.

Tips

Cooking Tip: Fresh berries work best for this recipe. Frozen berries are too soft and the custard won't set properly. Rinse fresh berries and pat dry with paper towel just before using.

Variation: Instead of sprinkling the tops with sugar and browning them, make a caramel syrup topping instead. Combine ¾ cup (175 ml) granulated sugar and ¼ cup (50 ml) water in a saucepan; bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Boil, without stirring, until syrup turns a deep caramel colour. Let cool until bubbles subside; pour a thin layer onto custards and let harden.

For the Adventurous: Use pitted fresh cherries in place of the blackberries and add 1 tbsp (15 ml) amaretto with the vanilla.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Fried Cheese Curds with Dip



Ingredients

1 cup (250 ml) peach or mango, diced
1 tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice
1 tsp (5 ml) tandoori paste
1/2 cup (125 ml) sour cream
1 tbsp (15 ml) chives, chopped
Oil for frying
8 oz (240 g) Canadian cheese curds
1 cup (250 ml) tempura batter, store-bought or prepared (fairly thick)

Preparation instructions

In a blender, purée the peach with lemon juice, tandoori paste, sour cream and chives. Pour into a bowl and reserve.
Heat oil on medium-high heat in a deep fryer or saucepan.
Dip cheese curds into tempura batter.
Place well-coated cheese curds into hot oil and fry until golden.
Drain on paper towels and serve with sauce as a dip.

Tip

The oil used for frying must be very hot. Fry in small batches and keep warm in a 200°F (100°C) preheated oven.

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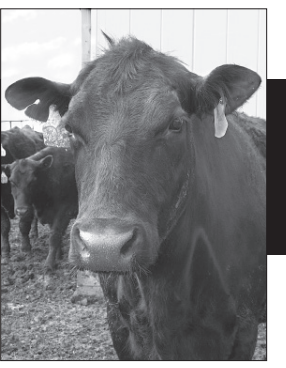

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Bubbly Potato Skins Dip

Potato skins are a favourite snack to munch on while watching the big game but making them is labour intensive. This hot, creamy and cheesy dip has all of the flavour with none of the fuss.



Ingredients

1 ⅓ cups (325 ml) shredded Canadian old cheddar or aged gouda cheese, divided
3 slices bacon, cooked crisp and finely chopped
1 cup (250 ml) plain yogurt, (not fat-free)
½ cup (125 ml) sour cream, (not fat-free)
¼ cup (50 ml) finely chopped green onions
2 tbsp (30 ml) cornstarch
1 tsp (5 ml) Dijon or dry mustard
¼ tsp (1 ml) pepper
Thinly sliced green onions, (optional)
Oven-baked potato wedges, raw vegetables pieces, potato chips, pretzels

Preparation instructions

In a bowl, combine one cup (250 ml) of the Canadian old cheddar cheese, bacon, yogurt, sour cream, chopped green onions, cornstarch, mustard and pepper. Spread into a shallow 4-cup (1 l) baking dish, smoothing top. (Can be covered and refrigerated for up to one day.)

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Bake dip, uncovered, for 15 to 20 min or until hot and bubbling around the edges. Stir and sprinkle with remaining Canadian old cheddar cheese. Broil for about three minutes or until top is golden. Sprinkle with sliced green onions (if using). Serve dish on a platter surrounded with potato wedges, vegetables, chips and/or pretzels for dipping.

Tips

Be sure yogurt and sour cream don't contain gelatin as they may split when heated.

If desired, reserve some of the bacon and sprinkle on top of the dip before serving for garnish.

For the adventurous: Use Canadian smoked cheddar or Gouda if it's available for added depth of flavour. Just be sure it's not processed cheese – it won't be the right texture. *Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada*

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Baked Manicotti



Ingredients

Sauce:
1 lb (450 g) lean ground beef
2 onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic cloves, minced
2 cans (28 oz /796 ml each) diced tomatoes
1 can (5 1/2 oz/156 ml) tomato paste
1 tbsp (15 ml) dried basil
1 tbsp (15 ml) dried oregano
1 tsp (10 ml) salt
2 tsp (10 ml) sugar
Pepper, to taste

Filling:
1 container (1 lb/450 g) Canadian Ricotta cheese
4 cups (1 L) shredded Canadian Mozzarella cheese
1 cup (250 ml) grated Canadian Parmesan cheese
3 eggs, beaten
¼ cup (50 ml) chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tsp (5 ml) salt
Pepper, to taste

Garnish:
3 cups (750 ml) grated Canadian Parmesan cheese

Preparation

In large saucepan, cook beef, onion and garlic on medium-high heat until meat is browned, about 10 minutes, drain. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, basil, oregano, salt, sugar and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook manicotti (in batches) according to package directions; drain, rinse in cold water, drain.

In large bowl, combine ricotta, mozzarella and parmesan cheeses. Add eggs, parsley, salt and pepper. Fill manicotti shells with cheese filling.

Divide sauce into 6 portions. Spread one portion each on the bottom of three 7 x 11-inch (18 x 28 cm) dishes (or similar size pans that will fit eight manicotti in a single layer). Arrange 8 stuffed manicotti in each pan. Spread remaining sauce over the manicotti. Cover pans with foil, refrigerate until ready to bake. When ready to serve, preheat oven to 350 °F (180 °C). Bake covered for 30 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and bake, uncovered until heated through, 10 to 15 minutes. *Yields 24 manicotti.*

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Trio of Fruit Smoothies

These drinks are made with frozen fruit and fresh, cold milk so you can enjoy the taste of summer goodness any time of the year.



Very Berry Smoothie
1 cup (250 ml) milk
¾ cup (180 ml) frozen strawberries
¾ cup (180 ml) frozen raspberries
1 tbsp (15 ml) sugar
½ cup (125 ml) vanilla yogurt

Blueberry Peach Smoothie
1 cup (250 ml) milk
2 cups (500 ml) frozen sliced peaches
¾ cup (180 ml) frozen blueberries
1 tbsp (15 ml) sugar
⅔ cup (160 ml) peach yogurt

Banana Split Smoothie
1½ cups (375 ml) chocolate milk
1 large frozen banana
1 cup (250 ml) frozen strawberries

Preparation

For each variation: In blender or food processor, purée together milk, frozen fruit and sugar (if called for) until smooth. Add yogurt (if called for); blend well. Pour into tall glasses. Serve immediately.

Tips: For the adventurous: Prepare Blueberry Peach Smoothie and add red or white wine to taste when adding yogurt. *Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada*

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DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Frozen Almond & Chocolate Cupcakes

These trendy cupcakes are easy to prepare and make perfect individual birthday cakes.



Ingredients:

BASE
4 cups (1 L) vanilla ice cream, softened
1/2 cup (125 ml) ground almonds
1/2 cup (125 ml) chocolate, grated

FROSTING
1/2 cup (125 ml) chocolate chips
1/2 cup (125 ml) cocoa powder
1/4 cup (60 ml) butter, at room temperature
8 oz (250 g) Canadian cream cheese, at room temperature
1 cup (250 ml) icing sugar
A pinch of salt

Preparation instructions:

Line a 12 muffin pan with foil or silicone muffin cups and set aside.

In a bowl, combine ice cream, ground almonds, and grated chocolate. Fill muffin cups with ice cream using an ice cream scoop. Freeze for two hours.

Melt the chocolate chips in a double boiler and add butter and cocoa powder. Mix cream cheese with icing sugar and salt, add the chocolate mixture and mix well. Pour the frosting into a pastry bag fitted with a star tip. You could also use a plastic bag (zipper type) from which you will have cut one of the lower corners diagonally.

Before serving, remove ice cream from the freezer, which is the base of the cake and top with frosting. Serve immediately. *Makes 12 servings.*

Note: You can replace ice cream with ice milk.

Chidren will have fun decorating the cupcakes with toppings.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

DAIRY MONTH RECIPE

Cheese Muffins

Ingredients:



⅔ cup (160 ml) all-purpose flour
½ cup (125 ml) whole-wheat flour
2 tsp (10 ml) baking powder
¼ tsp (1 ml) salt
1 cup (250 ml) grated marbled cheddar cheese
2 eggs
½ cup (125 ml) milk
1 tbsp (15 ml) vegetable oil
1 green onion, chopped
½ onion, chopped
¼ tsp (1 ml) salt
½ tsp (2 ml) pepper
1 tsp (5 ml) dry mustard

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350 °F (180 °C). Butter muffin tins.

Combine first four ingredients in a big bowl and mix well. Stir in grated cheese.

In another big bowl, beat in eggs and whisk in seven last ingredients.

Pour over dry ingredients. Stir until just moistened. Spoon into prepared muffin tins.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes.

Serve warm.

Source: Dairy Farmers of Canada

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