

Record Keeping 101

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Now that the harvest and holiday seasons are over, you may find yourself having a little bit extra free time and you may be wondering what you could do with some of that free time. Catching up on record keeping may be a good place to start if you find yourself in this situation. Record keeping is an effective way to get good data on your herd, and is very helpful when making management decisions. Despite its importance, record keeping is often undervalued and overlooked on many dairies. Many producers nowadays have some type of electronic record keeping system, with the most common being PCDART and DairyComp, but there are still a ton of farmers around that are using handwritten records. Handwritten records can be just as impactful, for those that stay on top of them and use them to their potential. Two areas specifically that would greatly benefit from increased adoption of good record keeping are calf and heifer management, and transition cow management. Good calf health records are difficult to come by on many dairies that we visit, yet this is a very important area to have records on. Implementing an extensive record keeping software can be a daunting, and maybe even unrealistic on some dairies that don't have access to technology. A simple solution is to start with detailed handwritten records. Charts work great for these situations where you have a column for calf ID, date, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, duration, amount, withdrawal time etc. At a later date, if you become more comfortable or able to implement an electronic software to help with record keeping, assign an employee a half a day a week to inputting the handwritten records into the system. Likewise, transition cow management can be facilitated with the use of good record keeping. Again, having a simple chart as outlined in the figure below can be a simple, effective tool for monitoring individual cow health across the transition period. Lastly, as part of FARM 4.0 "Continuous Improvement Plan" farmers will be required to have permanent written or electronic drug treatment records that are maintained and available for review by veterinarians. There is no time like the present to get started on establishing a good record keeping protocol if you have not already!



Daily Fresh Cow Health Monitoring Card

Cow ID : 1234			Lactation No : 2			Calving Difficulty Scores: 1 = No assistance 2 = Assisted by one person 3 = Assisted by 2 people 4 = Assisted with mechanical traction 5 = Surgery						BCS – Body Condition Scores: 1 = Emaciated 2 = Thin 3 = Average 4 = Heavy 5 = Fat						
Calving Date : 03/22/2018 Time : 07:20 am			Calving Difficulty Score : 2 (See reference)															
Calf ID : 0105			BCS at Calving : 3 (See reference)															
Day No	Date	Temp	Retain placenta		Uterus discharge color & smell			Manure consistency			Ketosis		Milk fever		Mastitis		Diagnose & Treatment	Observations
			Y	N	Clear/ Yellow	Pink/Red no foul smell	Pink/Red foul smell	Loose	Normal	Stiff	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N		
1	03/23	101.8		✓		✓			✓					✓		✓		Has not passed placenta. Keep watching.
2	03/24	102.0	✓			✓			✓					✓		✓	Retained Placenta. No treatment for now. No fever yet	Looks alert and sparky. She is eating well
3	03/25	102.8	✓				✓		✓					✓		✓	Retained Placenta No treatment. No fever	Placenta is slowly detaching. Eating well
4	03/26	103.1	✓				✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	Metritis Antibiotic, 15 ml intramuscular	Cow is eating well. Placenta still attached to uterus
5	03/27	103.2		✓			✓		✓					✓		✓	Metritis	Placenta passed. Strong smell from uterus. Eating well
6	03/28	103.0		✓			✓		✓					✓		✓	Metritis	Uterus discharge looks less bloody. Pungent smell

Photo credit: PennState Extension