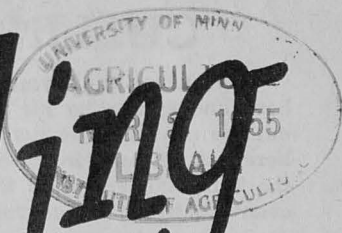
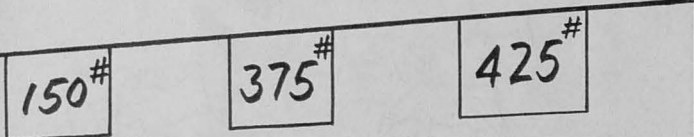


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Culling Pays

R. W. Wayne • H. R. Searles • R. D. Leighton



CULLING PAYS

The successful dairyman is constantly checking his herd and evaluating his individual cows. He weeds out the cows that do not make him money. If your herd has one or more cows that are definitely below the herd standard, send those cows to market. Successful dairying is now more than ever a matter of

BREEDING
FEEDING
WEEDING

The Culling Standard

The first question is how far down in your herd should you go in culling? The answer varies with your production level. If you have a herd averaging 400 pounds of butterfat, you may cull cows producing under 350 pounds. Your neighbor across the way may not even have any cows that produce that much, and at least at the beginning, his culling level must be much lower. Set a base for your herd and raise this base as production improves.



Which Cows to Cull?

1. **The cow with a diseased udder.** The cow who has had severe attacks of mastitis is usually one to cull, for she is usually a source of infection to other cows. Her production is low, and she is producing poor-quality milk because it contains a large number of bacteria.

2. **The shy breeder.** The cow who must be bred several times before conceiving is often unprofitable. Many of these who only calve once in 15-20 months often stand dry three to four months or more. Even though they may produce more in ten months after calving than the cow calving regularly every year, they usually are worth less to you over a period of years.

3. **The slow, hard milker.** This cow takes longer to milk and is more likely to get mastitis. Cows vary

a great deal in this respect. This trait may be inherited or may be a result of injury, but there is a good chance that these cows' offspring will have the same trouble.

4. The brucellosis reactor. In only a very few cases are you justified in keeping an individual cow that reacts positively to the blood test for brucellosis. She is an active source of infection to other cattle and to you and others working with her. The time will soon be here when markets will accept milk only from disease-free herds.

5. The temperamental cow. Some cows have disagreeable dispositions. They are the kickers, fence-breakers, or troublemakers in other ways. The highly nervous cow is also difficult to work with, and this nervousness often affects her production. Unless such a cow is an exceptionally good producer, it is usually advisable to replace her.

6. The cripple. A cow that becomes so badly crippled that she has difficulty getting around should usually be replaced by a younger animal. This is also true of a cow with permanent injuries such as leaky teats.

7. The low producer. Low production should be the main reason for culling cows from the average herd. Many herds have some cows that do not even pay for their feed—to say nothing of paying for labor and other costs of producing milk. Low production may be due to one of the factors mentioned above but is most often due to breeding with low inherited capacity for producing milk.

The average production for milk cows in Minnesota is 220 pounds of butterfat per cow. Thus, half of our cows are producing less than that amount, and some herds even average less than 100 pounds of fat per cow. No man can even get market price for his feed with such production.

In contrast, Minnesota cows in DHIA averaged 357 pounds of fat, with 576 herds averaging over 400



You've got to milk six times as many 135-pound cows as 400-pound cows to get \$1,000 over feed cost.



HIGH PRODUCING COWS MEAN*

- ★ **You get more for your labor.** The 135-pound cow† returns nothing for your labor; the 400-pound cow gives you \$1.10 an hour.
- ★ **Less dairy surplus for the country.** You must produce nearly twice as much butterfat if you have 135-pound cows than if you have 400-pound cows in order to get \$1,000 over feed cost.
- ★ **You have fewer cows to house and care for.** You will need 29 of the 135-pound cows to give you \$1,000 over your feed cost, when you could be getting the same return with only five 400-pound cows.
- ★ **Your production costs are lower.** It costs you 54¢ for feed alone to produce a pound of butterfat when you have 135-pound cows. That cost is only 34¢ when you have 400-pound cows.

* Prices quoted are at the 1954-55 level.

† 135 pounds is the average of the lowest group of herds in Dairy Herd Improvement Associations.

pounds of butterfat. This shows what can be done through good production management.

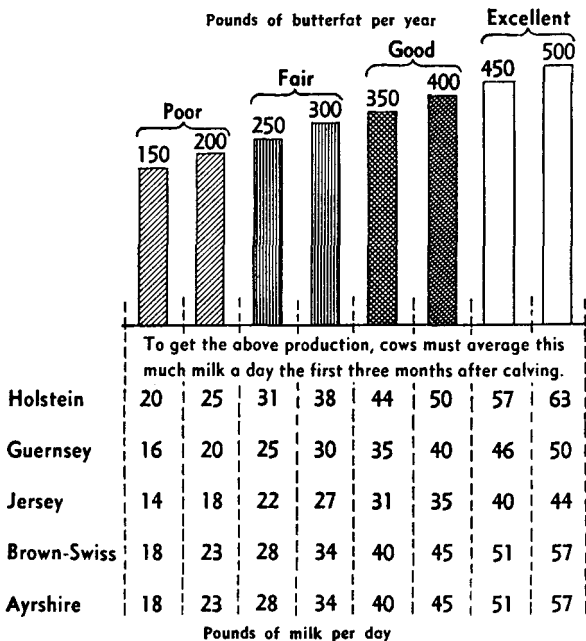
You can get a general average of your herd by taking your sales of milk or butterfat for the past year and dividing by the average number of cows in the herd. In this way you will get the delivered production per cow. By adding the amount you use in the house and feed to calves, you have the average production per cow. Is it good enough?

The 3,000 dairymen enrolled in Minnesota Dairy Herd Improvement Associations have a complete record on every cow in their herds. Thus they have complete information for culling.

Many dairymen have few or no useful records on their herd. But they can easily get some by joining a DHIA, by weighing the milk from each cow one day a month, or by measuring the milk (one quart of milk weighs 2 pounds). You can get further information by having samples tested monthly or every other month and then calculating the fat produced as well as the total milk.

Many creameries or milk plants will provide such testing service.

The table on the next page is your guide for estimating annual production—your cue to cull the low producers.



When to Cull?

The price on low grades of cattle is usually best in the spring and early summer. However, it seldom pays to hold cull dairy cows for a higher market price. The time to sell a cull cow is when she will no longer make you any money.

Cull cows can eat their heads off if kept too long. It costs about \$10 a month to feed a 1,000-pound cow. This means she must sell for \$1 more per 100 pounds liveweight for each month she is kept in order for you to get the value of feed back. Either this or she must gain 100 pounds in weight.

In most herds a cull cow down to 10 pounds of milk daily and not due to calve within a few months should be sold for slaughter.

Replacements Needed

Any culling program depends on a good herd-replacement program. In some cases this means buying cows or heifers but usually you must depend on growing your own replacements. When you buy cows, pay special attention to health and soundness of



udder. You may prefer buying heifers to reduce chances of udder infections. State regulations require that the seller give the buyer a health certificate.

If you decide to grow your own replacements, remember that a good sire is important. He should be a good proved sire whose transmitting ability is known, or a young sire whose breeding indicates that his daughters can be expected to develop into profitable cows. The breeding of the heifer going into your milking herd should be better than that of the cull she replaces. The care that the heifer gets until she freshens also greatly affects her production.

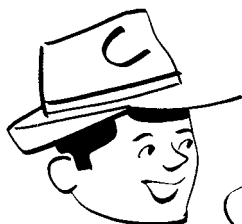
Checking the First-Calf Heifer

One of the culling problems you meet is rating your two-year-old heifers. First, you must evaluate the opportunities she has had. You cannot expect the heifer that calves at just two years of age, in thin condition, and in hot weather to produce as well as one who calves six months older in good condition of flesh and under winter conditions.

You must also consider such factors as difficulties in calving which may affect the start she gets in her first lactation. Also some heifers develop slower than others but produce better in later lactations than the first one would indicate.

While all these factors should be recognized, on the average a cow will produce 25 to 30 per cent more when she is mature than she did as a two-year-old. That is, a two-year-old producing about 300 pounds of butterfat can be expected to produce 400-425 when five or six years old. At least until you get your herd production up to a good profitable level, you should freshen more heifers and cull more cows.

Check These Points



CLOSE OBSERVATION OF
INDIVIDUAL COWS

INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTION
RECORDS

GOOD BREEDING
PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, INSTITUTE OF
AGRICULTURE, ST. PAUL 1, MINN.

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