



# Dairy News

*Another year is coming to an end and we at Dairyland Veterinary Service would like to extend our best wishes for a happy holiday season for you and your families. We would also like to thank you for your continual business and support. We are looking forward to the year 2013 where we will continue to strive to provide the best service possible for our clients.*

## What's the Big Deal about Average Daily Gain?

If you raise your own calves, you were probably contacted recently by one of our veterinarians who attempted to get you to record the average daily gains (ADG) of your calves. Our goal is to have calves double their birth weight by weaning at 8 weeks of age. This is the minimum requirement for gain in a good calf feeding program.

The 2 factors that prevent this are disease and inadequate amounts of feed (which can also lead to an increase in disease incidence).

But why worry about it? Current research has determined that for each 0.1 pound increase in ADG,

there is a corresponding increase of 125 pounds of milk at first lactation and subsequent lactations also have more milk.

Is it worth the cost of feeding more milk or replacer? Feeding more increases your milk replacer cost by double depending on how much you are feeding now. But the benefits are not only more milk as adults, but also less disease as they grow and an earlier weight to breeding.

The cost to raise a heifer to calving at today's feed prices ranges from \$1650 to \$2150. If you are considering culling some of your heifers early due to the high cost of raising them, ADG is a sound criterion for making this decision.

If you have your calves raised by someone else, ADG gives you an idea of how good of a job is being done. You might even want to consider paying custom raisers more for higher ADGs.

Here are some ideas to improve your ADG:

Feed more milk especially for the first 3 weeks until starter intake is consistent.

In cold weather put calf blankets on for the first 3 weeks.

Make sure calves have adequate time to transition from milk to starter.

Make sure both milk and water are fed at body temperature (102° F).



## Do you have a training farm?

The pool of qualified individuals that apply for jobs at your farm depends somewhat on how they perceive your farm. The farms that pay the lowest wages and have the fewest perks are what I call “training farms”. Workers apply to these farms to get work experience or get to know the area before moving up to better paying jobs. By default these farms have the highest turnover of labor and the least skilled workers.

The next level is the “average farm”. They provide more employee training, higher salaries (around the industry average) and some perks. The pool of candidates is larger because they include some of the workers at training farms that are ready to leave for greener pastures.

The highest level is the “wage-setting farms.” They get the best people because they pay the best salaries. They have the most experienced workers because they retain their employees longer. They can also have higher expectations for their employees, because they can easily find new candidates for the job. Applicants for these farms are more experienced and come from both training farms and average farms. The candidates that don’t qualify will try for employment at average farms.

The key to improving your farm’s level without higher salaries is by improving other areas that affect employee perception. This can be done by having better working conditions, more positive feedback from management, equipment that works properly, a good training program and a friendly environment for employees.

Dairyland Veterinary Service is willing to help with employee training to improve their perceptions of your farm and the care they give to the animals on your farm.

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HOLIDAY HOUR CHANGES:

MONDAY DEC. 24 ON CHRISTMAS EVE THE CLINIC WILL BE CLOSING AT 2:00 PM

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: [www.dairylandvet.net](http://www.dairylandvet.net)



***Wise Choices. Healthy Animals.***

