



Pilot Herd Case Study

The Hoard's Dairyman Farm was purchased in 1899 by the founder of Hoard's Dairyman magazine, W.D. Hoard. Home to the nation's longest continuously registered Guernsey herd, the Hoard's Dairyman Farm underwent a major expansion in 2006 which resulted in the completion of a new milking parlor and 240-cow sand-bedded free stall barn. Current herd average is just over 17,700 pounds of milk with a daily tank average of 59 pounds. The farm consists of 550 acres of which 450 are tillable. Jason Yurs is the Farm Manager.

Premises Registration

Premises were originally registered by staff at the Hoard's Dairyman Farm in 2004 and have been updated each year since. The initial decision to register the farm's premises was primarily made with encouragement from the editorial staff at the Hoard's Dairyman magazine who has been an early and consistent advocate for the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) program. In 2006, to pre-

pare for upcoming requirements of the NAIS, farm staff began tagging all newborn calves with RFID tags purchased through the Holstein Association's National Farm Animal Identification and Records program. Jason said calves are easier to tag and the farm staff expects NAIS requirements will someday become mandatory.

In addition to the main site, heifers from the Hoard's Dairyman Farm are housed at two other locations, totaling about 300 head. Each of these sites maintains its own premise registration which is renewed annually. Cattle are moved weekly from the main site to one or both of the other locations. The Hoard's Dairyman Farm has also purchased several large groups as a part of its expansion, and these cattle have also been tagged. As of April 2008, every animal on the farm was identified with an 840 RFID tag.

Identification System

DairyComp 305 is used for herd management and data recording. The farm has two All-flex wands with accompanying Palm computers which are used for veterinary checks, recording breeding information, tracking inventories at various farm locations, and ensuring milking cows are in the correct pen. Data recorded on

“With the Palms we have individual cow histories available to us cowside while the veterinarian is here. We’re now making quicker, more accurate treatment decisions which makes our herd checks more efficient.”

“Once the vet leaves, downloading the information has saved at least an hour’s time in data entry.”

*– Jason Yurs,
Hoard’s Dairyman
Farm Manager*



Top 3 advantages of current system

1. Time and labor savings
2. Quicker management decisions made cowside
3. Accuracy and completeness of herd data

the Palm computers is transmitted wirelessly to a computer in the office at the conclusion of management tasks.

Initial equipment set-up took 4 hours for each reader and Palm. The farm has two wands and has experienced problems with the shorter of the two (about 1 foot in length). Employees have adjusted to the equipment rather quickly, especially those most familiar with DC305 software. Occasionally the handheld computers have locked up but not on a routine basis. Jason reported he was very pleased with service provided by WLIC and Valley Ag Software.

The Hoard's Dairyman Farm is also utilizing an electronic ID system with neck transponders provided by their milk equipment supplier, DeLaval. This system permits automatic milk, flow rate, and machine-on time monitoring with summary reports. In addition, the transponders signal real-time cow activity to antennas located in the free stall barn and holding pen areas. About 70 percent of all heat detecting and breeding is conducted by monitoring activity. Jason would eventually like to have one system to manage herd checks as well as monitor cow performance.

Values Gained

Initial investment into each reader and computer was projected to be around \$3,800 per unit with an annual licensing fee of \$300. Jason reported that he is very pleased with the efficiency he has gained by utilizing the RFID technology.

- **Quicker Herd Checks** – Veterinary checks are now performed in less than 1 hour. The system has also allowed more information to be available cowside improving accuracy of treatment decisions and saving time.

- **Labor Savings** – In the past, a cumbersome paper recording system was used for veterinarian visits which ne-

cessitated having two people assisting the veterinarian. The Velcro strap on the computer allows farm staff treating cattle to have a second hand available while still holding onto the Palm.

- **Data Accuracy** – Treatment data and results of pregnancy diagnosis are recorded cowside during herd checks and transmitted wirelessly to the farm's management system. Data is now more quickly posted to the computer and about one hour's time has been saved by eliminating manual data entry after herd checks.

- **Data Completeness** – At the satellite locations, Jason said the readers ensure that treatments and breedings performed are quickly and accurately recorded into the farm's main record keeping system. In the past, scraps of paper or towels were used to initially record information.

- **Peace of Mind** – Jason finds the inventory tracking features of the equipment very useful. Cows in the wrong pen are identified quickly and moved. Heifer inventories allow Jason to track growth and aid in verifying bills from his heifer growers.



Future Outlook

Hoard's Dairyman has been a strong supporter of uniform national identification efforts and the Hoard's Dairyman Farm is finding value in participating in the program. Jason has found that more and more of his suppliers are asking for the farm's premises registration number as a part of their own tracking systems. He expects that the farm will continue using its current system as well as supporting efforts for full implementation of unified animal identification.

