



Pilot Herd Case Study

Situated near the northwestern town of Loyal, Wis., Meyer Family Dairy was established in the mid-1960s by Allen Meyer, who milked 12 cows when he bought the farm. Fast-forward to 1998 when Allen and his son, Mike, formed a partnership and the Meyer Family Dairy expanded into a 550-cow free stall facility. Today, Mike serves as the farm manager and oversees nine employees, including herdsman, Josh Olson. Cows are milked three times daily in a double-10 parlor with a daily tank average around 70 pounds. The family also farms about 700 tillable acres.

Premises Registration

In 2005, Meyer Family Dairy became a registered premise after Mike learned about the registration system. He thought premises registration was a good way to protect his herd from potential disease outbreaks, given the cases of pseudo rabies that spread throughout swine herds in his area during 2007 and the BSE findings in

Canada. Premises registration is also required by the Clark County Fair, where Mike's niece and nephew exhibit cattle from the Meyer Family Dairy.

Along with annual premises registration, Meyer Family Dairy also individually identifies all of their cattle with 840 RFID tags. Mike says he utilizes premises registration and individual identification as a precautionary measure, since he currently sends his 100-day-old calves to two different heifer growers about 30 miles away from the home farm. About 200 of Meyer's calves commingle with 1,300 others at one custom-raising operation while 100 more commingle with about 40 other milk cows at the second farm. All heifers are brought back to the home farm 60 days prior to freshening.

The Meyer Family Dairy is in the midst of building a new heifer facility with Mike hoping that by late 2008 an animal will never have to leave the home farm other than for sale or show.

Identification System

Mike Meyer and herdsman, Josh Olson, are the primary operators of the animal identification system at the Meyer Family Dairy. DairyComp 305 is the preferred choice of software for dairy herd management, combined with one Allflex wand and one HP iPAQ hand-held computer. Both Mike and Josh took only a short time to get acquainted with the equip-

“The equipment helped us drop an hour off the typical time it used to take us to do injections.”

“There is no losing in this program, we continually learn this technology can do more for us.”

*– Mike Meyer,
Meyer Family Dairy
LLC Manager*



Top 3 advantages of current system

1. **Efficiency of herd management tasks**
2. **Accuracy in data collection**
3. **Opportunity to accelerate and capitalize on new technology as it moves into the future**

ment which was initially set up and maintained on the farm by Valley Ag Software. Mike and Josh use the wand and hand-held at least once a day for giving Posilac or reproductive hormones as part of the farm's Ovsynch program. They are also used for recording information during artificial insemination and veterinary checks.

Prior to becoming a pilot herd, Mike had been looking at a similar ID system for about three years. Mike explains that equipment is used so much that another wand is needed for the many tasks where it is implemented.

Beyond routine injections and vet checks, Mike has been working with Fox Valley DHIA to automate milk testing on the Meyer Family Dairy. Though this system has not been put in place yet, Mike says there is a great potential to increase the efficiency of the milk testing regimen.

Values Gained

- **Quicker Injections**- Both Mike and Josh noticed that the implementation of the new equipment has greatly improved efficiency when it comes to administering injections. During vet checks and on injection days, Josh says he used to struggle to keep up, but has now dropped around an hour off the typical time frame for each task.
- **Data Accuracy**- Mike notices the data they are keeping is now much more accurate than when they kept it with pen and paper. Simple data entry mistakes are now avoided.
- **Labor savings**- Mike notes that although the initial process of tagging each animal with RFID tags required extra time and labor, the farm has experienced excellent retention with the new tags. The hand-held and wand used in combination

to complete management tasks are easily implemented into the routine and are far less cumbersome than the clipboards previously used on the farm to keep records.

- **Faster data entry**- Josh adds that it now takes only a few moments to simply transmit the information to the computer rather than entering data into the computer by hand after completing data collection.

- **Opportunity with technology**-Mike sees implementing the newest technology on the Meyer Family Dairy as a great opportunity to accelerate the farm into the future. By staying on

the cutting edge of management technology, Meyer Family Dairy will continue to remain competitive in the dairy market.



Future Outlook

Mike Meyer sees strong value in the adoption of a universal animal identification system. In his eyes it is a very powerful tool that is needed to avoid losing much of the livestock population in the event of a mass disease outbreak. Such diseases as pseudo rabies in pigs have plagued the northern Wisconsin area, which Mike sees as a prime example of what can happen in such a situation and how much could be saved with greater producer participation in animal identification programs.

Mike and Josh are continually finding new opportunities to implement the technology on the farm and are excited about implementing other programs and protocols to improve the management of their herd.

