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A Health Record System For Michigan Dairy Herds

Michigan State University Extension Service

Farm Science Series

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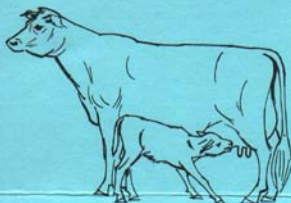
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A HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM



For Michigan Dairy Herds

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Many dairy herd owners have expressed the need for a record system that will keep them up-to-date with breeding and health information on each cow in the herd. The system described here is offered as a program to provide this information with the least effort to the dairymen. Features of the system are:

- An individual folder for each animal in the herd for recording identification, calving and breeding information, mastitis and udder health, reproductive and other diseases. Records should begin at the time the animal enters the herd by birth or purchase.
- Color tabs to show status of each animal at a glance.
- Records you can keep in a file box or notebook.

Get Breeding and Health Folders and Tabs:

From your county extension agent, veterinarian or others designated in the county that have them available.

Get File Box or Notebook Cover:

From local store that handles office supplies. (1½ inch ring notebook cover will hold up to 50 folders. Convenient for writing on folder but not easy to use as a holder for papers with information on that individual animal. A file box will hold a large number of folders, may file additional information in each folder, and provides more protection for folders and tab placement).

Suggested Method for Using Tabs

When a cow freshens, place a *black* tab on the month of freshening and leave it there until the cow is diagnosed pregnant.

Shortly after calving place a *yellow* tab on the month for the cow to have her post-calving check by the veterinarian to determine if the reproductive tract is normal and if the cow is ready to be bred.

The *yellow* tab should also be used to designate any animal to be checked by the veterinarian for any reason other than pregnancy diagnosis.

SUGGESTED COLOR TAB USE:

BLACK:

Fresh cows not settled. Placed on month of calving.

YELLOW:

Cows to be checked by veterinarian, usually for post-calving check. Placed on month to be checked.

RED:

Cows to be bred, watch closely for heat. Placed on the month to be bred.

BLUE:

Cows to be pregnancy checked by veterinarian. Placed on month to be checked.

GREEN:

Cows diagnosed pregnant. Placed on the month due to calve. Green tab serves also as a reminder to turn the cow dry to allow an appropriate dry period before the date due to calve.

Cut out and place on inside cover of notebook or lid of file box.

As soon as the cow is pronounced normal and ready to be bred, place a *red* tab on the month to be bred to signify that the cow should be bred at the next heat period. Thus, a *red* tab means you should watch the cow very closely for heat.

When a cow is bred place a *blue* tab on the month to be checked for pregnancy. Be certain to leave the *black* and *red* tabs on the folder until the cow is diagnosed pregnant. The *red* tab followed by a *blue* one would mean that the cow should still be watched for heat, especially at 18 to 24 days after the previous breeding. If a cow is rebred, move the *blue* and *red* tabs to the appropriate months.

When a cow has been diagnosed pregnant, place a *green* tab on the month due to calve. At this time all other tabs — *black*, *red*, and *blue* — can be removed from the folder. The *green* tab also serves as a reminder to turn the cow dry about six weeks ahead of expected calving so the cow can have a sufficient dry period.

The tabs can be important herd management tools. A glance at all folders will immediately show the number of cows (*green* tabs) that are pregnant and due to calve each month.

Green tabs will also indicate when the cows should be turned dry and how many cows will be dry at various times during the year.

Black tabs will reveal the number of open cows or cows that have not been diagnosed pregnant.

If a *black* tab and *red* tab on the same folder are separated by more than two months, it could indicate a problem cow and one that should be checked immediately in order to get her bred as soon as possible.

A monthly examination should include:

1. Cows bred 35 to 65 days for pregnancy.
2. Cows fresh 60 days or more and not observed in heat.

3. Animals calving since last visit that had difficulty at calving (retained placenta, etc.) and those showing or have shown abnormal discharge.
4. Those animals that have been bred 3 or 4 times and not settled.
5. Those showing abnormal heat cycle lengths.
6. Other animals that should be checked and treated for mastitis and/or other diseases.

Keep Good Records

Records must be accurate, complete, and up to date to be of maximum value.

Proper use of records and organizing work so that most of the routine can be accomplished at prearranged times (monthly or bi-monthly visits) make for more economical use of veterinary service.

Preventive medicine gives greater financial return and satisfaction than last ditch efforts to save a dying animal. The old adage — one ounce of prevention is worth many pounds of cure — certainly holds true in veterinary medicine as well as human medicine.

The herd owner or some one responsible for herd operations should assume the responsibility for maintaining the record system.

The veterinarian should be acquainted with the record system and fill in current information on animals treated or examined.

Likewise, the inseminator should list breeding information on the folder unless the herd owner desires to transfer the information from the breeding slip.

All tab placement should be done by the person responsible for the herd unless the veterinarian moves the yellow or blue tabs indicating future examination needed. Cooperation of these three individuals contribute much and are essential for a successful health record system.