



Dairy Notes

June 30, 2009



Carol Collar, Dairy Farm Advisor

680 N. Campus Drive,
Suite A Hanford, CA 93230

Email: collar@ucdavis.edu

Phone: (559) 582-3211 Ext. 2730

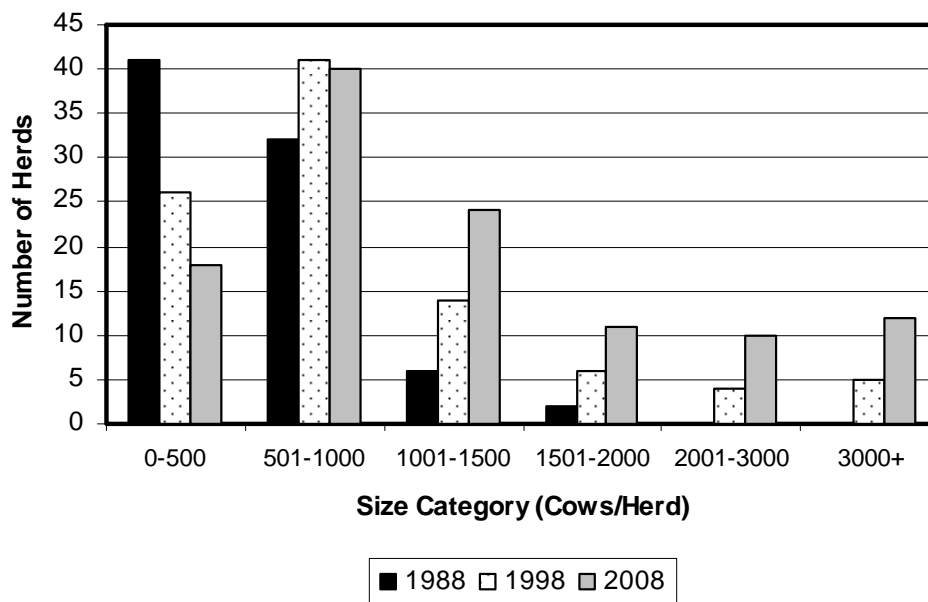
Website: <http://cekings.udcavis.edu>

Fax: (559) 582-5166

Kings County DHIA—Herd Size Characteristics

Average herd size in our local Kings County DHIA has continued to grow over the years. Look in any old DHIA annual report book and you can find pages containing charts titled “A Look At Our Past”, which show production and herd size data going back for many years. But the average doesn’t tell you everything. How many small, medium and large herds are there? It is interesting to see how this has changed over time. Following is a chart showing the distribution of herds by herd size comparing 1988, 1998 and 2008.

**Kings DHIA 1988 - 2008
Number of Herds by Size Category**



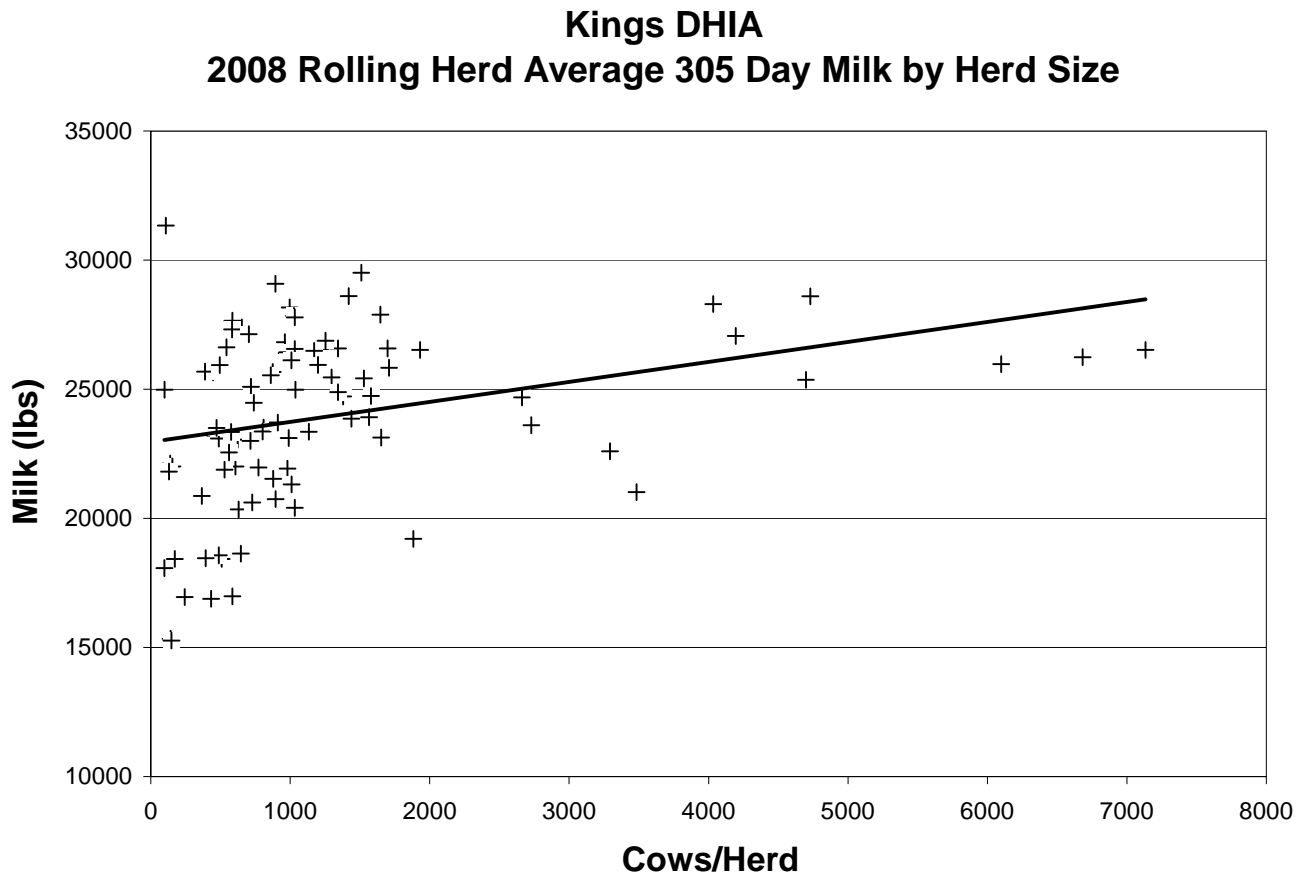
In 1988, most herds were still 500 cows or less (tallest black bar), and the average cows per herd was 583. There were no herds over 2000 cows in 1988. Ten years later, the largest number of herds shifted to the 500 to 1000 herd size category (tallest dotted bar) and the average size was 920 cows/herd. There were 3 herds over 2000, and 5 herds with over 3000 cows per herd in 1998. Finally in 2008, the largest number of herds are still in the 500 to 1000 size category (tallest gray bar), but the average herd size is now 1311 cows per herd. All of the 1000-plus herd size categories have increased since 1998. It should be noted that the figure only represents DHIA herds – not all Kings County herds (not all herds in the county participate in DHIA testing programs).

Following are the numbers of DHIA herds (and total herds) for Kings County in the three selected years used for the herd size comparisons:

- In 1988 – 81 DHIA herds (143 total)
- In 1998 – 96 DHIA herds (145 total)
- In 2008 – 115 DHIA herds (161 total)

The percentage of herds participating in Kings DHIA programs has increased from 57% in 1988 to over 70% in 2008.

How do various herd parameters tracked with DHIA records correlate with herd size? For Kings DHIA herds, there appears to be a negative correlation of DIM (days in milk) with herd size. That means larger herds tend to have lower DIM. There is also a small negative correlation of SCC (somatic cell count) with increasing herd size – that means that SCC tends to be lower in larger herds. On the other hand, there is a positive correlation of % cull rate with herd size (larger herds tend to have a higher cull rate). There also is a positive correlation of milk production with herd size as shown in the following chart.



It will be interesting to see how these herd size dynamics and DHIA participation may change in 2009 as our dairies deal with the realities of an enormously challenging economic downturn. Remember that there are opportunities to continue DHIA testing at less frequent intervals or on different plans to reduce costs. Now more than ever may be the time to use your DHIA records to help you “keep the best and cull the rest...”

The following article is a summary of information presented by Dr. Robert Fetsch, a professor at Colorado State University. The presentation was made at the Western Dairy Management Conference last March. You can read Dr. Fetsch's entire paper in the proceedings at: <http://www.wdmc.org/proceed.htm>

Farm Family Stress and Depression

Financial and emotional stress levels are high everywhere, but nowhere greater than among dairy and farm families. Studies have shown that farming is one of the top high stress occupations based on the incidence of stress related diseases (heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers and depression). Economic and market conditions change regularly. The weather is unpredictable. Lack of control over what you pay for inputs and what you receive for outputs can make you feel powerless and lead to high stress levels.

Extensive research has found higher suicide rates among farmers and ranchers than among the general public. In the US, suicide rates for rural men are twice that of their urban counter parts, and the rate is increasing over time. It is important during these tough times to look out for one another. Be alert for signs of stress in your friends, neighbors, your family or even yourself. For example, there may be changes in routines, or an increase in illness. The appearance of the farmstead and care of livestock may decline. There could be an increase in farm accidents or farm children may show signs of stress. Watch for the following signs of chronic, prolonged stress:

Physical – headaches, ulcers, backaches, eating irregularities, sleep disturbances, frequent sickness, exhaustion

Emotional – sadness, depression, bitterness, anger, anxiety, loss of spirit or humor

Behavioral – irritability, acting out, withdrawal, passive-aggressiveness, alcoholism, violence

Cognitive – memory loss, lack of concentration, inability to make decisions

Self esteem – feelings like “I’m a failure” or “I blew it...”

The greater number of signs or symptoms, the greater your concern should be. If someone you know is exhibiting the following signs, connect them with professional help:

Depression - sad face, slow movements, unkempt look, feeling hopeless, discouraged, listless, negative thoughts, reduced pleasure in usual activities, people problems, physical problems, guilt and low self esteem (“it’s all my fault...”)

Suicidal intent – severe, intense feelings of anxiety or depression, withdrawn, alone, lack of friends and supports, sense of complete powerlessness, hopeless feelings, alcohol abuse, frequent or constant thoughts with a specific plan in mind, and cries for help including making a will, giving possessions away, or making statements like “maybe my family would be better off without me”

The first step in helping someone is recognizing signs. But what should you do next? Try to connect with the person you are concerned about. Tell them gently that you are worried about them, ask them to tell you about how things are going, then give them your time and attention and *be a good listener*. Do not judge. Do not tell them to “just tough it out”. Respond to them with respect, honesty and sincerity. Let them know that it is OK to admit they are having problems and to seek help.

Find out about resources. In Kings County, the Behavioral Health Dept. has a website <http://www.countyofkings.com/mhsa/index.htm> where you can find many services including a 24-hour crisis hotline: 800-655-2553. Another helpful resource is a website for locating professional help locally or anywhere in the US:

<http://www.therapistlocator.net/>

All cries for help (certain statements that may indicate a person is considering suicide, but has not decided for sure) should be taken seriously. If you recognize suicidal thinking, call 1-800-SUICIDE for help.

Stress and Depression in Dairy Families

The average California dairy is losing about \$100,000 a month. Estimates project a 10-15% reduction in the number of dairies for next year. In order to support family dairy farms [WIFSS](#), the [Kings County Agricultural Commissioner's](#) office and [Colorado State University](#) partnered with dairy industry organizations to offer a webinar on farmer stress, depression and suicide prevention for professionals allied with the dairy industry on June 11th.

Attending on 54 links from around the State were field staff from producer and processor organizations, veterinarians, agricultural lenders, regulatory staff and various educational groups working with producers such as [UCCE](#) dairy advisors, [NRCS](#) field staff and other consultants. Access to the webinar and logistical planning was provided by [Tim Niswander](#), Agricultural Commissioner for Kings County.

The presenter was [Dr. Robert Fetsch](#) an educator from [Colorado State University](#) nationally recognized for research and outreach in mental health issues for farmers. Dr. Fetsch has a family dairy background. County mental health professionals from the major dairy counties were on hand and several requests for information or assistance were received within several hours after the conclusion of the webinar.

Following is a link to a recording of the webinar:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/958447234>

Other informational materials will be available soon at the [California Dairy Quality Assurance Program's website.](#)

Dairy Events at the Kings Fair

Dairy Day and Heifer Sale - Friday, July 10th
Pre-Sale Buyers Social 5:30—6:30 PM
Heifer Sale starts at 7 PM

This year's Kings Fair runs from Thursday, July 9th through Sunday, July 12th. Dairy Day is on Friday, July 10th. FFA and 4-H youth will be exhibiting their project animals throughout the day. At 5:30 PM there will be a social event preceding the heifer sale for dairy buyers. The 2009 Kings Fair Milk Quality awards will be announced before the sale starts. Please join the festivities to support local youth in the community and to enjoy some fellowship with friends and neighbors in the dairy business.

Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program

July 22, 2009

Robert J. Cabral Ag Center
2101 E. Earhart Avenue ~ Stockton, CA
95206

UC Cooperative Extension is providing this FREE educational opportunity for dairy producers. Topics will include how to improve the quality of your cull animals, and how this translates to more \$\$\$ in your pocket. The program will conclude with a vaccination site demonstration and hands-on training with a captive bolt gun for humane euthanasia.

12:30 PM - Registration

1:00 PM - Quality Assurance Program - *Dr. J. Maas, Dr. J. Oltjen, and J. Heguy, UCCE*

3:00 PM Vaccination Site Demonstration - *Fort Dodge and Dr. J. Maas*

Captive Bolt/Humane Euthanasia Demonstration
- *Dr. J. Reynolds, UC VMTRC*

For more information or to pre-register, please phone Jennifer Heguy, UCCE Dairy Advisor for Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties at (209) 525-6800 or email jmheguy@ucdavis.edu

“Tough times don’t last, tough people do...”,

Stan Azevedo made this observation as he introduced **Louie and Arlene Simas, the 2009 Distinguished Dairy Couple**. Their dairy roots run deep in Kings County, and they were honored at the June Dairy Month Dinner in Hanford on June 26th. Also honored was the **Valadao family, 2009 Dairy Family of the Year**. Congratulations to **Kaci Raven**, newly crowned **Kings County Dairy Princess for 2009**. You can read all about the dairy dinner festivities in the local news section of the Hanford Sentinel website <http://www.hanfordsentinel.com/>, and you can also view photos of the celebration and princess contest in the Sentinel’s photo gallery. There is also a link to the special June Dairy Month Supplement that was published on June 6th where you can read more about this year honorees. From the Sentinel home page, just click on the “Special” tab on the far top right of the page.

Dairy Families vs. Hanford Fire Dept. Softball challenge June 17th—

A good time was had by all! Photos by Carol Collar. Many more will be available for viewing soon.

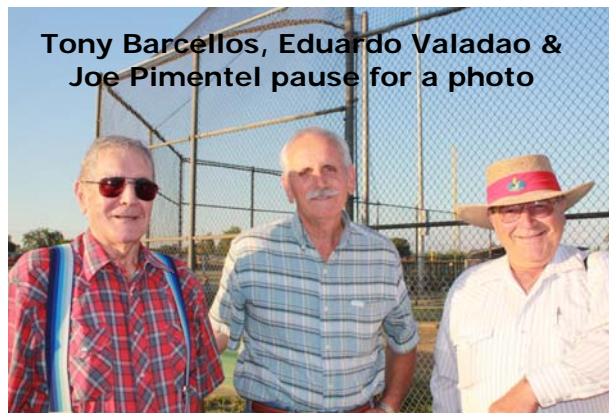
Don Veenendaal offers tips to Joseph Pimentel



**2009 Dairy Team—
Better luck next year!**



Josh Veenendaal in fine form



Tony Barcellos, Eduardo Valadao & Joe Pimentel pause for a photo

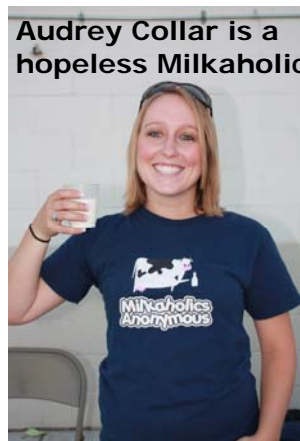


The Valadao family relaxes after the game

We all smile for ice cream! Amanda Avila, Jacob Pimentel and Ashley Avila



Louie & Arlene Simas enjoy conversation with Anthony Brazil



Audrey Collar is a hopeless Milkaholic



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Kings County
680 N. Campus Drive, Suite A
Hanford, CA 93230

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Printing and mailing of the Kings County Dairy Notes, and the UC California Dairy Newsletter may be curtailed soon due to budget constraints. We encourage you to sign up to receive future issues by email. Just go to our Kings County Cooperative Extension website: <http://cekings.ucdavis.edu/> and click on "Agricultural Mailing Lists Request". You will be directed to select which newsletters you wish to receive and asked for your name and email address.

Carol Collar
Farm Advisor
UC Cooperative Extension—Kings County