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## Managing DHI employees in a large-herd environment

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As herds increase in size, with the ever changing design of milking parlors, more employees were needed at each facility to test a herd. We have always maintained 10 Milk Test Supervisors. We expected them to test 9 000 cows per month. Our commission plan, insurance base and bonuses, were all based on 9 000 cows per tester, per month. We now have grown to over 100 000 cows, and are able to still maintain only 10 Milk Tester Supervisors.

Because of the strict labor laws in California, and the different milking times of each dairy, it was important to develop a schedule that would:

1. Meet all labor rules.
2. Minimize the amount of overtime we had to pay.
3. Assure that adequate rest is received between herds.

California's labor-day can be set by a twenty four hour clock. You determine what time your day starts and ends. At San Joaquin our day starts a 12:00 am. To help you understand this better, if a tester starts a herd at 4:00 pm and finishes that herd at 4:00 am, and starts another herd at 8:00 pm, he has work 12 hours straight, but because the hours fall into different work days, he has worked two eight hour days. You are only required to pay the worker at a straight time rate that meets or exceeds the states minimum wage rate (\$7.50 per hour). Scheduling is important to avoid time and one half for overtime.

Herds by size

Herds	Herd Size
9	12 - 200
17	201 - 299
15	300 - 499
22	500 - 699
18	700 - 899
14	900 - 1199
17	1200 - 1499
20	1500 - 4000

I would like to say that handling the increase was a magic formula that I developed. But credit must be given, were credit is due. San Joaquin has three brothers that started the labor shift that we still use today:

1. One helps the other and they share the commission, or
2. Barter the hours (you help me x hours and I will work x hours for you).

*Table 1. Assisted testers, herds, number of cows and herds.*

	No. herds	Cows tested	Herds assisted	Total herds
<i>Full time testers</i>				
John Silva	18	22 500	4	22
Joe Borba	25	21 500	3	28
Dennis Smith	17	11 500	2	19
J Dias	17	11 000	4	21
R Zamora	21	9 000	4	25
N Silva	6	9 000	2	8
E Padilla	18	9 000	2	20
<i>Retired</i>				
M Silva	3	3 000	2	5
Joe Silva	5	6 000	3	8
Ray Silva	2	3 000	1	3
10	132	105 500	27	

*Table 2. Information on specific parlors and design.*

	Cows milked	Testers required	Milking time	Travel time
Largest parlors				
Double 34	3 902	4	10 hrs	4.0 hrs
Double 32	3 500	4	11 hrs	0.5 hrs
2Double 24	3 745	2	10 hrs	0.5 hrs
Double 30	2 750	3	10 hrs	0.5 hrs
3 barns	2 350	3	10 hrs	0.5 hrs
Double 30	2 333	2	10 hrs	0.5 hrs
26 Cal Walk Tru	2 193	3	11 hrs	0.5 hrs
Double 24	1 913	2	8 hrs	0.5 hrs
3 barns	1 875	3	8 hrs	0.5 hrs
40 Round barn	1 870	3	16 hrs	0.5 hrs
Double 25	1 750	2	10 hrs	1.5 hrs
Double 16 (2x)	1 640	2	20 hrs	1.5 hrs
Double 20 (basmt)	1 588	2	10 hrs	0.5 hrs
Double 20 (basmt)	1 582	2	9 hrs	0.5 hrs
2 pits 19 each (3x)	1 510	2	16 hrs	1.0 hrs
Double 10 (2x)	1 045	2	18 hrs	1.0 hrs
2 pits 16 each (2x)	958	2	16 hrs	1.5 hrs

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As herds increased in size, they began to help each other, by trading hours. The lead tester scheduled his helpers, which allowed us to test more cows, with fewer employees. Today we have seven full time testers, 3 semi- retired and 1 tester assistant.

Testers, herds, number of cows and herds that he assists are reported in table 1

Commission Pay Rate:

Am Pm milking	0.33 cents per cow with a \$10.00 Stop charge.
2 milk weight per day	0.45 cents per cow with a \$10.00 Stop charge.
3x am pm	0.45 cents per cow with a \$10.00 Stop charge.
3x (all milkings tested)	0.60 cents per cow with a \$13.00 Stop charge.

To explain how this all works we need to talk about specific parlors and design (Table 2).

We have found doing more than 20 cows per side is difficult for one tester, to keep up with the milker's. Every effort is made to maintain the normal milking times.

From the information that I have given, you can do the math. Yes, depending on how much help they need, and what herds they share, we do have Milk Test Supervisors making 60, 70 and 80 thousand dollars per year.

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**So how does it  
work?**

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