

Abstract by Steven Smith - Cohort Analysis: A unique method of evaluating the performance of dairy herds. Conduct analyses of subgroups, trends, relationships, and effects of herd and feed management changes on cow performance

Traditional milk recording or dairy herd improvement (DHI) herd summary reports generated by dairy records processing centers provide valuable insight into the performance and status of dairy herds. The summary reports are generally based on the whole herd and/or lactation groups. Monitoring the herd summary statistics over time enables the detection of trends and changes in animal performance. However, it often takes time for the results of herd and feed management changes to be reflected in the herd summary statistics. For example, if a dairy producer changes the feeding and management of the dry cows and newly fresh cows, it could significantly impact these cows and thus the herd. However, it will take a number of months to see a significant change in herd summary statistics such as test day and annual rolling herd average milk production. In cohort analysis reports, the herd is divided into cohort groups, such as month of calving, and the statistics are calculated for each cohort group. By analysing the performance of the smaller cohort groups, it is possible to more succinctly evaluate the impact of herd and feed management changes within a herd.