Sample Prep On-Farm & Handling Large Herds in the DHIA Lab

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With assistance from Ed Vink, & Rick Bealer

Large Herd Testing

- It’s not Rocket Science... But it is a Science!
- It’s not Fine Art... But there is an art to making it all happen correctly
- It’s not a Ballet... But choreography is definitely involved
Who, What, Where, & How?

Kings County DHIA – Central San Joaquin Valley, California
Currently processing about 157,000 samples/month
Ed Vink, Manager  124 herds  13 Testers
1,274 Cows - Average herd size
2 Herds under 100 Cows, 12 over 3,000

Southern Counties DHIA – Southern San Joaquin Valley and Chino Basin in Southern California – 2 Labs
Currently processing about 262,000 samples/month
Rick Bealer, Manager  138 herds  20 Testers
1,903 Cows - Average herd size
1 Herd under 100 Cows, 27 over 3,000

Reality Check

- Larger herds are not just coming someday, they’re here!
- DHIA Testing and Lab Services are extremely important to the large herd management.
  - Large herds can be like a 1,000 lb. Gorilla.
Reality Check

- **Testing Very Large Herds Can Present Certain Challenges!**
  - Turnaround push on large herds can change turnaround for smaller herds
  - Disrupts the schedule because of extra Testers and meters needed
    - Smaller herds are “re-arranged”
    - “Us versus Them” mentality
    - Technology & Efficiency
    - How you pay encourages both

- Labs may need additional instruments
  - Contract suggested with large herds
  - Extra vials & rack investment
  - Instrument wear & service increases
  - Personnel issues
Reality Check

- **Testing Very Large Herds Can Present Certain Challenges**
  - Large herds are accustomed to discounts
    - DHIA Membership all pay the same
  - Getting large herds really boosts revenue
  - Losing large herds really affects revenue
    - Instrument & fixed costs
    - Extra lab personnel
    - Tester income

It is possible to tame the beast!

Preparation is the Key

- **It all begins with the Monthly Testing Schedule**
  - Foundation of the Lab’s Schedule
  - Communication is critical element
    - Herds
    - Testers
    - Lab Personnel
    - Data Entry

- **No Surprises!**
Testing Schedule

MAY 2008

SUNDAY  MONDAY  TUESDAY  WEDNESDAY  THURSDAY  FRIDAY  SATURDAY

1

2  3

4  5

6

7

8  9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18  19

20  21

22

23

24

Tester’s Schedule

Starts the Gears In Motion

15  16

- Writing notes
- J. C. reference
- Fernandes
- Paulo Brito
- V - F

-...
Preparation is the Key

- **Tester's & Meters**
- **Bottles & Racks**
  - Have at least 2x what’s needed on hand and ready to go on any given day according to the Tester’s schedule
- **Sample Handling**
  - Reading the Meters
  - Volume & Preservative
- **Data Entry**

Preparation is the Key

- **How long are you going to have to run in order to get it all done?**
  - Start earlier that day – Finish everything that day!
  - Pickup some of the samples before the herd finishes to get the lab started – Turnaround of samples and data is critical
  - The instruments must run every minute for maximum efficiency from start to finish
What Else?

- Accommodate breaks, hourly check samples, lunches, and overtime?
- Provide "bar stools" for sitting down
- Have "backups" cross-trained to step in and help
- Provide refrigerator, water, microwave, coffee
- All Close By
- Take care of your people!

What Else?

- Have a Master Herd Sheet
  - Herdcode, Test-day, times, etc.
  - Trays or samples numbered and logged on Herd Sheet
  - Corrections and special notes

Caps in Empty bottles – Missed
Bottles turned upside down – Too Fresh, Hospital, Skipped or Not Tested
What Else?

• Keep log-in, herd paperwork, data merging, and sending files outside of Lab functions
• Feed the instruments!

Use Fax for needed corrections

Open yet isolated from distraction

What Else?

• Maintain steady pace
• Pay attention to the details
  – workstation cleanliness
  – sample care & agitation
  – proper sample tempering
What Else?

- Chemical inventory fresh and ready.
- System maintenance, weekly calibration, and Sample Unknowns scheduled with the big herds in mind.
- Hourly Check Samples ready & handy.

What Else?

- Priority set as “first in, first out” because every member herd deserves great service
  - 300 cows or 3,300 cows
What Else?

- Washing and care of bottles and lids critical for the next day’s herds

Summary

- Planning is Critical
- Commitment to Lab & Field Inventory, Personnel, Training
- Maintain a Continuous Flow of Samples to the Instrument(s)
- Maximize Technology
- Work Smarter, Not Harder