

Dairy Frontiers

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UW
Extension

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Happy Thanksgiving!!!

Winter is approaching quickly and we soon shall see snow. This means meetings and information from Extension.

Survey Results. Inside you will find the results of the dairy survey that we completed this past summer. Take a few minutes and read about our Fond du Lac dairy industry. Who are the dairy producers in this county? What are the trends? This is a great dairy county. There is a large diversity of producers in this county. Undoubtedly, Fond du Lac needs them all. Herd numbers, cow numbers, and milk production are primary drivers in keeping Fond du Lac viable for the veterinarians, feed suppliers and cheese plants that depend on the dairy industry for their livelihood.

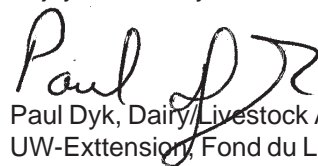
And where does Fond du Lac rank in the state? According to the NASS, **Fond du Lac is number 1 for milk production!!!** In 2006, Fond du Lac returned (after 10 years) to being ranked number 1 for milk production with 21,200 lbs. This is the herd average. Based on the survey inside, average production per **cow** in the county is over 22,000 lbs.

What about cow numbers? In 2006, Fond du Lac ranked 2nd in the number of cows added to the county (2,000 more) Calumet added 2,500 from 2005 to 2006. From 2004 to 2006 Fond du Lac added 3,500 cows to reach its current level of 44,000 cows. This is a trend only seen by a couple of other counties in the state.

Meetings For December, the Modernization/Expansion Meeting on December 13 should interest anyone who is expanding/building parlors, calf facilities, or transition cow facilities. This should give a great start for anyone even thinking about making changes in the next couple of years.

Other meetings of interest in December are the annual Forage Council Meeting and the annual Dairy Day in Arlington. Read the brochures for more info.

Enjoy the holiday season!



Paul Dyk, Dairy/Livestock Agent
UW-Extension, Fond du Lac County

Fond du Lac Dairy Survey - Results

Paul Dyk

Who are the dairy producers in Fond du Lac and what do they think?

This is the purpose of the survey that I completed this past summer. Part of UW Extension's purpose is to plan programming based on the needs of the clients. For my position, the primary clients are the dairy producers of Fond du Lac County. All 395 dairy producers with a milk permit were given (by mail or hand delivery) a survey to complete. There were 146 of these surveys returned (37%); this is excellent for a survey of this type. Thanks to all.

Based on a previous informal survey, I know that about 58% of the cows in FDL are in 60 herds over 150 cows. The other 42% of the cows are in 336 herds under 150 cows. These two groups often have quite different facilities, management styles, goals, and possibly different perspectives on the industry. To capture these differences, I split my survey results into herds over and under 150 cows. There were 34 herds that responded to the survey over 150 cows and 109 herds under 150 cows (3 herds did not give herd size).

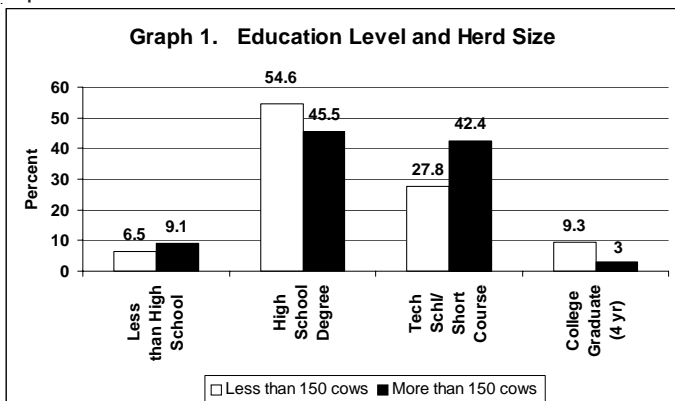
So what were the results?

In Table 1 we can see who responded to the survey, mostly experienced (ok – older) men that have been in farming a long time. Many surveys came back with producers answering the question “How long have you been farming?” with a written answer, “All my life.”

Table 1. Demographics

Age	50.1
Number of Years Farming	29.4
Gender	
Female	2.8%
Male	97.2%

When looking at the education levels (Graph 1), more than 35% said they had educational training beyond high school. Both large and small farms had less than 10% of the producers with less education than a high school diploma.



What about the future? Table 3 shows that 60% of producers on smaller farms intend to continue farming for more than 10 years. However, the interesting question is

	Less than 150 cows	More than 150 cows
Less than 5 years	11.8%	0.0%
5-10 years	26.5%	18.2%
More than 10 years	61.8%	81.8%

what will happen to the other 40%? One question that I asked (Table 4), tried to understand what will happen when these producers stop/retire from farming. For

	Less than 150 cows	More than 150 cows
Child	29.5%	44.4%
Other relative/partner	3.6%	8.3%
No one, farm will likely stop producing milk	17.9%	0.0%
Not sure, farm will likely continue producing milk	18.8%	38.9%
Not sure, farm will likely stop producing milk	30.4%	8.3%

smaller farms, 41% of the producers that will stop farming within the next 10 years, expect the farm to continue producing milk. This means that 59% of the farmers that plan to discontinue farming in the next 10 years, will not continue producing milk. What does this mean? If there are 330 farms under 150 cows, **we can expect at least 75 farms to discontinue milking in the next 10 years.** This would not include those who leave unexpectedly (low milk prices, death, etc). From 1997 to 2007 there was a 38% drop in herd numbers in FDL County; based on this survey, this trend is likely to continue.

What about production and facilities on these farms?

These farms average 69.8 lbs/cow/day (Table 5). This would be 21,289 lbs on a 305 day lactation. The NASS (National Agricultural Statistical Service) has pegged FDL County at 21,200 lbs/cow in 2006. Yep, that's as close as it gets. In this survey the larger herds average 78 lbs/cow/day and the small herds average 67 lbs/cow/day. I

	All Farms	Less than 150 cows	More than 150 cows
Average milk production (lbs/cow/day)	69.8	67	78
Average SCC (last month – milk plant)	200.0	199	204

also asked the question, "What was the average SCC last month for your herd?" The answer was nearly the same for both groups, around 200 SCC. Most of the larger herds have freestalls for housing (94%) and milk in parlors (79%). Most of the smaller herds have tiestalls for housing (75%) and milk in the tiestalls (85%).

Goals for the next 5 years?

Table 6 lays out some differences between the two herd sizes. Large herds intend to increase herd size (56%), and modernize their manure (44%), milking (29.4%) and housing (44.1%) systems. A smaller percentage of small herds intend to make the same changes.

	Less than 150 cows	More than 150 cows
No change	44.0%	26.5%
Leave Farming	14.7%	0.0%
Modernize	24.8%	64.7%
Manure System	11.9%	44.1%
Milking Facilities	11.9%	29.4%
Housing	13.8%	44.1%
Increase Herd Size	11.0%	55.9%
Reduce Herd Size	10.1%	2.9%
Go Organic	3.7%	2.9%

Employee Information

The average small farm has 1.4 employees (an average of 109 cows); the average larger herd in this survey has an average of 8.4 employees (an average of 487 cows/farm). These estimates come pretty close to the 50 cow/person rule of thumb; these numbers do not reflect the number of owner/operators on each farm. An employee survey was conducted in the summer of 2007 to look at the demographics and needs of the employees. These results are coming out this winter.

**What areas do producers want more information?
What's important to them?**

To get at this question I asked producers to rate different topics on a scale of 1 to 7 with 7 being very important Table 7. When you look at the numbers it is difficult to say one or two topics really surface as the most important. In general the larger herds rated all topics higher.

Rank	All Farms		Less than 150 Cows		More than 150 Cows	
		Rating		Rating		Rating
1	Foot Health	4.6	Foot Health	4.5	Manure Management	4.9
2	Reproductive Management	4.2	Reproductive Management	4.1	Foot Health	4.8
3	Dairy Nutrition	4.2	Dairy Nutrition	4.1	Financial Management	4.8
4	Forages	4.1	Forages	3.9	Transition Cow Management	4.7
5	Transition Cow Management	4.1	Transition Cow Management	3.9	Dairy Facilities	4.6
6	Milk Quality	4.0	Milk Quality	3.9	Milk Quality	4.5
7	Genetics	3.9	Genetics	3.8	Forages	4.5
8	Financial Management	3.8	Dairy Replacements	3.5	Whole Farm Business Planning	4.5
9	Dairy Facilities	3.8	Land Use Issues	3.5	Dairy Nutrition	4.4
10	Manure Management	3.7	Financial Management	3.5	Land Use Issues	4.4
11	Land Use Issues	3.7	Dairy Facilities	3.5	Reproductive Management	4.4
12	Dairy Replacements	3.7	Manure Management	3.4	Dairy Modernization	4.4
13	Dairy Price Risk Management	3.6	Dairy Price Risk Management	3.4	Dairy Price Risk Management	4.3
14	Dairy Modernization	3.5	Dairy Modernization	3.3	Genetics	4.2
15	Whole Farm Business Planning	3.5	Whole Farm Business Planning	3.2	Dairy Replacements	4.1
16	Dairy Biosecurity	3.3	Dairy Biosecurity	3.1	Dairy Biosecurity	4.0
17	Dairy Production Records	3.2	Dairy Production Records	3.0	Employee Training	3.9
18	Employee Training	2.5	Employee Training	2.1	Dairy Production Records	3.8
19	Grazing	1.9	Grazing	1.9	Grazing	2.0
20	Organic Farming	1.6	Organic Farming	1.7	Organic Farming	1.5

Where do producers get their information?

To answer this question, producers were asked to rate the importance of information sources (1 being low - 7 being high). For larger producers, the highest ranked source of information is their nutritionist and consultant while the veterinarian is the most important on smaller farms. See Table 8.

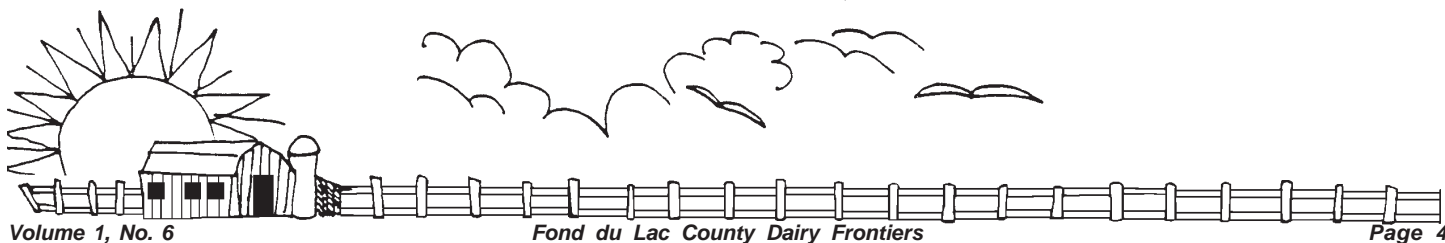
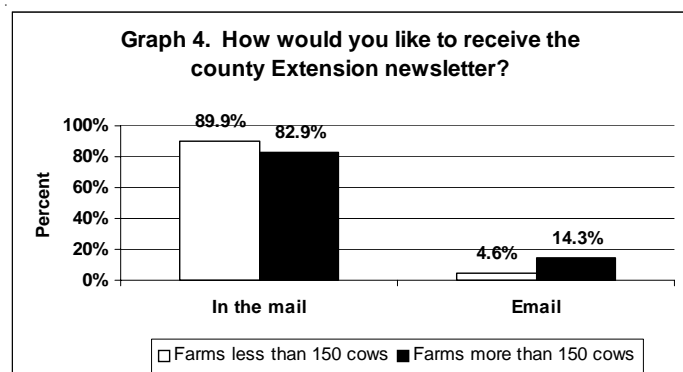
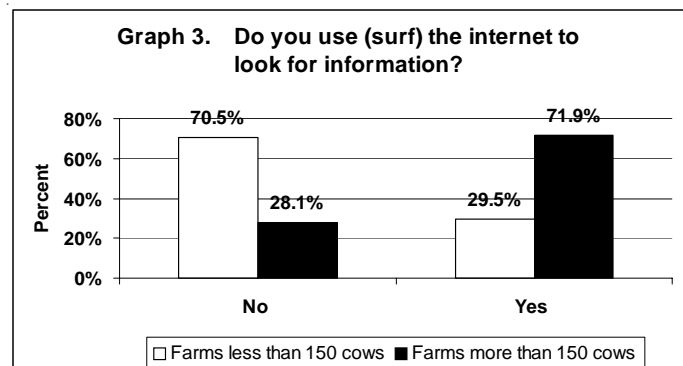
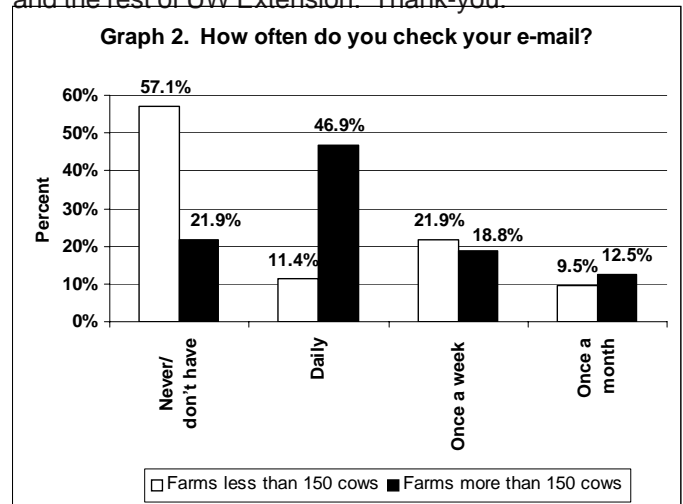
Table 8. Where do producers get their information?

Rank	Farms less than 150 cows		Farms more than 150 cows	
	Category	Rating	Category	Rating
1	Veterinarian	5.4	Nutritionist /Consultant	6.0
2	Ag. Newspapers (State Farmer, Agriview)	5.0	Veterinarian	5.9
3	Monthly Publications (Hoards, Dairy Today etc.)	5.0	Monthly Publications (Hoards, Dairy Today etc.)	5.1
4	Nutritionist /Consultant	4.9	Ag. Newspapers (State Farmer, Agriview)	4.9
5	Extension Newsletter	4.2	Extension Newsletter	4.9
6	Milking Equipment Rep	4.0	Milking Equipment Rep	4.6
7	Radio	3.1	Web/Internet/E-mail	4.1
8	Television	2.5	Pharmaceutical Rep	3.1
9	Web/Internet/E-mail	2.5	Radio	2.9
10	Pharmaceutical Rep	1.9	Television	2.4

How are farmers connecting to the internet/web/e-mail?

One of the questions that often comes up is how are dairy producers adapting to the new information age? This survey gives some interesting answers. Graphs 2 through 5 give some interesting insight into this new technology. About 65% of the larger herds check their e-mail at least once a week while only 35% of the smaller herds check their e-mail at least once a week. About 70% of the larger herds use the web to look for information compared to only about 30% of smaller herds. The final question is perhaps the most interesting in relation to how producers want to receive information. When asked how they prefer to receive the County Extension Newsletter, over 88% of the herds still want to receive it in the mail (90% of the small herds and 83% of the large herds). Having talked to a number of producers, it seems likely to me that there are two reasons for this. First, high speed internet is not available to most producers so that navigating the web and receiving e-mail can be slow at times. Second, there is still a preference for having a publication in hand; something that is mobile and can transported to another room (perhaps a room like the bathroom).

So now what? I plan on using the survey to plan my next couple of years. The survey will help me decide what is the best way to connect with and impact dairy producers. Finally after a few years, I hope a follow-up survey will help me determine if I am having an impact. Again, thank-you to all who helped fill out and send back the surveys. The great response makes the results meaningful for myself and the rest of UW Extension. Thank-you.



How Managers of High- and Low-Profit Farms Respond to Low Milk Prices ***Ken Bolton, UW-Extension, Dairy/Livestock Agent, Jefferson County*** ***From: Cowscope, September 2007***

Data from farms submitting financial information to the UW-Extension Center for Dairy Profitability, Agricultural Financial Advisor (AgFA) program was utilized to assess differences in how high-profit and low-profit farms responded to the low milk price year of 2006. Twenty high-profit farms and 162 low-profit farms were identified based on their 2006 cost basis Rate of Return on Assets (ROROA). High-profit farms generated OROA equal to or greater than 7% and low-profit farms had a ROROA under 7%.

Little differences existed between high- and low-profit farms in the number of cows milked nor amount of milk produced. High-profit farms did slightly reduce the amount of milk sold per cow while low-profit farms slightly increased milk production. High-profit farms modestly reduced the number of crop acres farmed but low-profit farms very slightly increased their crop acres.

The largest difference between the two categories was in investment in assets per cow. High-profit farms operated with \$3,040 fewer assets per cow than low-profit farms. High-profit farms earned a higher Net Farm Income From Operations (NFIO), NFIO per hundred weight, cost basis ROROA and market value ROROA. High-profit farms' NFIO per cow declined by \$20 more than low-profit farms

however the two groups experienced the same NFIO per hundredweight of milk.

Although revenue per cow fell more for high- versus low-profit farms, high-profit farms still produced more revenue than low-profit. High-profit farms earned a higher milk price, more crop revenue, sold more breeding livestock, earned higher government payments and more custom income. High-profit farms also reduced expenses \$31/cow more than low-profit farms. However, because low-profit farms' milk production did not go down they actually had a lower cost of production per hundredweight than high-profit farms. The investigator comments that had low-profit farms been able to produce during 2005 with the same cost efficiency as they did in 2006 that they would have enjoyed higher NFIO per hundredweight and per cow than the high-profit farms.

For low-profit farms to be more competitive they would have needed to improve their asset utilization, enhance revenue generation and emphasize cost efficiency during high as well as low milk price years. You may access the paper "An Analysis of How Wisconsin AGFA Dairy Farms Responded to the Lower Milk Price of 2006" by Dr. Gregg Hadley, UWExtension, Farm Management Specialist at: <http://www.uwrf.edu/extension/GreggH.htm>

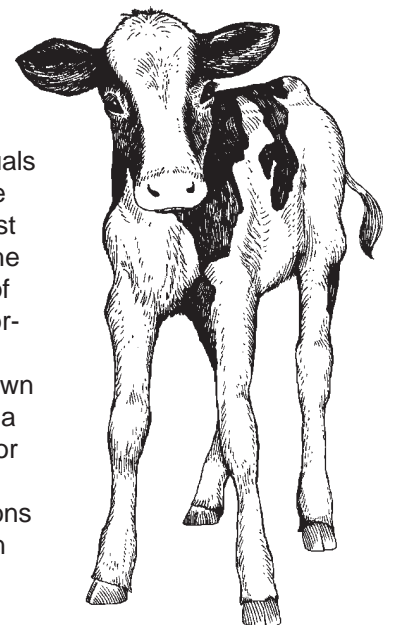
From the past... ***From the Fond du Lac County*** ***Gazetteer, 1868***

"A description of Ashford Township"

Among the annoyances with which early settlers of this town had to contend, was the ferocity of bears; these were so numerous that they became very bold, and somewhat dangerous. On one occasion Mr. Alex St. Mary, while looking after his oxen, was set upon by a bear which had a cub near by. He sought refuge by climbing a tree; but she was not to be foiled of her prey without further effort, and attempted to climb after him, when his dog seized the bear by the thighs and pulled her back; the dog then retreated and the bear after him a short distance, and then returned to the tree, as soon as she attempted to climb, the dog would again pull her down, St. Mary in the tree all the time calling for help; this was continued until several men, hearing the cry for help, arrived with guns and Bruin made her escape; though with the loss of her cub.

Herd Builder Opportunity for Youth

The Fond du Lac County Holstein Association is offering \$1000 toward the purchase of a registered Holstein heifer for individuals 18 years or younger. The money is available interest free and is repaid when the animal turns 24 months of age. This is a great opportunity for someone who wants to purchase their own registered animal. What a great way to get money for a fair calf! Additional information and applications are available at Extension office from Kathy (929-3171).



Mike Rankin's Page

Calendar of Events

December

- 3 Area Soil and Water - Nutrient Management Meeting, Dodge Co. Administrative Bldg., Juneau 10 am – 3 pm
- 4 Area Soil and Water - Nutrient Management Meeting, Millhome Supper Club, Kiel 10 am – 3 pm
- 10 Annual Fond du Lac Holstein Association Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, Fond du Lac Avenue
- 12 Arlington Dairy Day, Arlington Research Station, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (**See enclosed brochure.**)
- 13 Dairy Modernization/Expansion Meeting, UW-Fond du Lac, room 113/114 University Center (**See enclosed brochure.**)
- 14 Dairy/Forage Seminar and Forage Council Annual Mtg., Rm. 206 Admin/Extension Bldg., UW-FdL, 11 am-2:30 pm
- 28 Tractor and Machinery Safety Certification Program, Rm. 206 Admin/Extension Bldg., UW-FdL, 10 am–3:30 pm
- 29 Fond du Lac County Fair **AND** Wisconsin State Fair Steer Identification and Weigh-in, Cow Palace, Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

January

- 4 Registration Deadline for 2008 Master Gardener General Training Program (**See enclosed brochure.**)
- 8 Dairy Road Show – Gaining the Competitive Edge, American Legion in Lomira, 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- 8 Dairy Road Show – Gaining the Competitive Edge, Millhome Supper Club, , 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- 9 Agronomy Update Meeting, Rm. 114 University Center, UW-FdL, 12-3 p.m.
- 15-17 WI Fertilizer, Ag Lime, and Pest Management Conference, Alliant Energy Center, Madison
- 24-25 Wisconsin Corn Soy Expo, Kalahari Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells.
- 29-30 Midwest Forage Association Annual Conference, Wisconsin Dells

February

- 2 Dairy Day of Learning
- 12-13 Management Assessment Center
- 23 Equine College
- 23-24 WI Holstein Convention
- 26 Raising Quality Heifers Meeting, UC 113/114, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

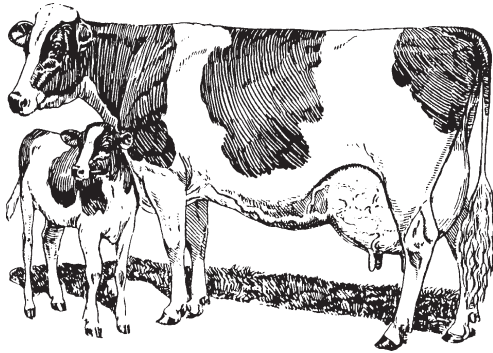
March

- 1 Ag Showcase & Celebration, Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds
- 7 Heart of the Farm, Women's Conference, Oshkosh



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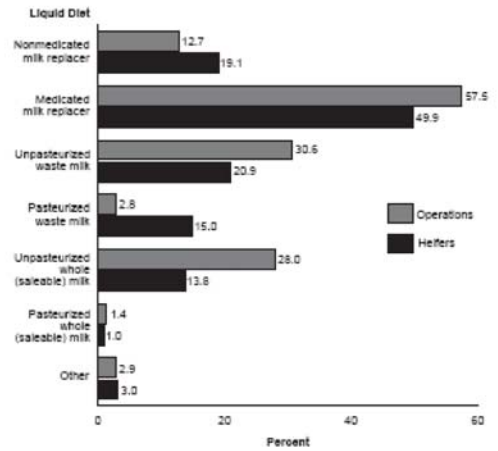
NAHMS 2007 Results (October 2007)

Heifer Management

- Nearly all operations (96.5 percent) had at least some heifers that were born and raised on the operation. Almost 9 of 10 heifers (87.4 percent) were born and raised on the operation. Although 4.7 percent of operations had heifers born on the operation but raised elsewhere, these operations accounted for 11.5 percent of all heifers.
- Unweaned heifer deaths during 2006 accounted for the highest percentage of deaths among the animal classes at 7.8 percent, while 5.7 percent of cows and 1.8 percent of weaned heifers died.
- More than half the operations (55.9 percent) removed newborn heifer calves immediately after calving. These operations accounted for 65.6 percent of all heifer calves.
- Overall, medicated milk replacer was fed on more than half of all operations (57.5 percent). Similar percentages of operations fed unpasteurized waste milk and unpasteurized whole (saleable) milk (30.6 and 28.0 percent, respectively) (figure 1).
- The operation average age of heifers at weaning was 8.2 weeks, with large operations weaning calves at an older age (9.1 weeks) than medium and small operations (7.9 and 8.2 weeks, respectively).

- Preventive practices were commonly used for heifers: 94.6 percent of operations administered at least one preventive practice to heifers, and 94.6 percent of

Figure 1. Percentage of Operations that Fed a Liquid Diet to Heifers Any Time Prior to Weaning During 2006, and Percentage of Heifers that Received a Liquid Diet Any Time Prior to Weaning, by Type of Liquid Diet



heifers were on these operations. More than 60 percent of operations vaccinated heifers against bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), parainfluenza Type 3 (PI3), bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), and leptospirosis.

- During 2006, almost 9 of 10 cows and heifers (86.0 percent) delivered a calf that was alive at 48 hours. Of the calves born during 2006, 93.5 percent were alive at 48 hours, while 6.5 percent were either born dead or died prior to 48 hours of age. Almost one in five calves (17.2 percent) needed assistance during delivery.