Highlights of NAHMS Dairy 2002: Part II: Changes in the U.S. Dairy Industry

In 2002, the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study of dairy operations in the United States. The Dairy 2002 study was conducted in 21 major dairy States and was designed to provide information to both participants and industry from operations representing 82.8 percent of U.S. dairy operations and 85.5 percent of U.S. dairy cows. Data were collected from December 31, 2001, to February 12, 2002.


- Almost one in two dairy operations has disappeared since 1991, with roughly a 4- to 5-percent decrease per year. Combined with the relatively slower decline in milk cow numbers, the result is nearly a 73 percent increase in average herd size.
- From 1991 to 2001, total annual U.S. milk production increased 11.9 percent. This increase was achieved with a concurrent 7.2 percent decline in number of milk cows and a 20.7 percent increase in milk production per cow.
- Between 1991 and 1996 there was a sharp decline in the percentage of operations that reported using Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) record-keeping systems. However, the percentage of operations using DHIA record-keeping systems remained the same between 1996 and 2001 (Figure 1).
- Overall, a higher percentage of operations fed a total mixed ration in 2001 (47.0 percent of operations) than in 1995 (35.6 percent of operations).
- From 1995 to 2001, rolling herd average milk production (cow average) increased 2,012 pounds (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Percent of Operations by Type of Individual Record-Keeping System Used

Figure 2. Rolling Herd Average Milk Production
• There was essentially no change from 1995 to 2001 in the overall mortality of preweaned heifer calves born alive (10.8 percent and 10.5 percent of heifer calves, respectively). There was no change in heifer calf mortality due to scours/diarrhea between 1995 and 2001 (6.5 percent reported for both years).

• Basically, no change occurred between 1991 and 2001 in the percentage of operations that allowed calves to receive colostrum at first nursing. Approximately one-third of operations still use this practice.

• More operations were separating maternity housing from housing used for lactating cows between 1995 and 2001 (45.4 percent and 53.1 percent, respectively).

• Overall, a substantial decline occurred between 1995 and 2001 in the percentage of operations that, before bringing cattle on-farm, tested cattle for brucellosis (31.0 percent and 15.9 percent of operations, respectively) and tuberculosis (23.4 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively) (Figure 3).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720–2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326–W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250–9410 or call (202) 720–5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mention of companies or commercial products does not imply recommendation or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture over others not mentioned. USDA neither guarantees nor warrants the standard of any product mentioned. Product names are mentioned solely to report factually on available data and to provide specific information.