



# MANAGEMENT *Outlook*



## Ripps Dairy Valley Virtual Farm Tour Hosts

Attendees at this year's World Dairy Expo will have the chance to see firsthand how the Transition Cow Index® can be used to improve production management. Ripps Dairy Valley, owned and operated by brothers Gary, Troy and Chuck Ripp, focuses on the comfort and productivity of their cows.

Family is a big part of the success of Ripps Dairy Valley. The three brothers along with their wives and children help extensively with the day-to-day operations. Their mother, Eileen, is the MVP and makes lunch for six full time employees every day, picks up supplies, and runs errands. The original partnership was formed in 1975 by the brothers, taking full ownership and farms became an LLC in 2004. During that time, the herd grew from 260 cows to the current herd size of 860 cows.

As the herd grew, new tools for measuring performance were integrated, including fresh cow evaluation. By using the Transition Cow Index®, developed by the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine, they were

able to evaluate fresh cow performance and health. The Ripps discovered that numerous cows had negative values indicating a poor start to the lactation. To ensure healthier cows and better lactation performance, the dairy constructed a new transition cow barn in 2008. Today, cows get a better start after calving and as a result, Ripps Dairy Valley has a rolling herd average of 32,856 pounds of milk.

### **Ripps Dairy Valley Virtual Farm Tour at World Dairy Expo**

**Thursday, September 30, 12:00 p.m.**  
**Hosted by: Ripp's Dairy Valley, Dane, WI**  
**Managing Transition Cows**

**New this year! Can't make it to World Dairy Expo?**  
**Check out the virtual farm tours after the**  
**show at [www.world-dairy-expo.com](http://www.world-dairy-expo.com).**

---

# Lower Somatic Cell Counts with Help From AgSource

---

Market demands for export may force US dairy processing plants to use only milk with a somatic cell count (SCC) of less than 400,000. While regulations may not change, it may be necessary to meet a new quality standard in order for processors to remain competitive in the marketplace. Lowering SCC can and will reap rewards for dairy producers who currently have a SCC higher than the 400,000 threshold.

AgSource has several tools to help members' effectively lower somatic cell counts. While DHI testing has offered individual and herd SCC information for many years, this information is most effective when it is looked at over time. The Udder Health Management (UHM) Package, is a useful tool to help tackle the problem.

The first step in dealing with high SCC is to identify which cows are infected. Next, identify what is causing the

infection. By looking at the UHM Cow Report, cows with a high SCC can easily be seen. More importantly, a history of high SCC is shown which allows managers to make decisions about which cows potentially are a problem. When used with the UHM Summary, managers can also see what groups are having issues and how SCC numbers are trending. Based on this information, managers can make solid decisions on which cows to culture. Culturing is important in determining what type of problems exists in a herd so cows can be treated properly and other problems that may be contributing to the high SCC can be addressed. Continued use of the UHM Package allows managers to monitor progress.

Managing SCC is a never ending job, but with the UHM Package, managers can more easily spot problems and address them before they are an issue. If you have questions about how to order the report, be sure and talk with your DHI Field Technician.

---

## Recording Genetic Information

---

One of the most significant changes in the dairy industry is the recent introduction of genomics. While work still continues, genomics has opened the doors for dairy producers to make genetic improvements in a short amount of time. Like all new genetic improvement tools the gain is greatly enhanced if high genetic potential semen is placed in heifers and cows with known sire and dam identification. This decreases genetic losses due to inbreeding and increases the potential of genetic mating programs. AgSource can assist members to get the most out of genetic information. Recording genetic information with AgSource including sires, service sires and maternal grandsires is a valuable part of the program and once recorded the information can be maintained in the data base. This information will allow members to see the greatest genetic potential of high end sires. Matching these records with stored information on cows and heifers can be used with a corrective mating program to unleash the true genetic potential of a herd and gain the future rewards of genetic improvement.

While recording extra data requires more time from member herds, time spent can be turned into valuable information. Currently, the accuracy of the reproductive information on some reports is dependent on reporting all Breeding Dates, Open and Pregnancy Confirmations and Do Not Breeds. This information enables AgSource to track

basic reproductive information such as Calving Intervals, Service and Preg Rates, Preg Losses, Conception Rates, Dry Period Lengths and Voluntary Waiting Periods (VWP). Once tracked, AgSource produces valuable reports and summaries which can be used to manage herds. Using these tools to track herd progress supports improvement in these areas while maximizing the efficiency of managers. Valuable time can be used reviewing reports and making decisions instead of spending hours gathering the information to sort through. Herds making use of team management meetings find the reports useful because all in attendance have the same basic printed information to review, rather than each team member having to explain personal data to the entire team. Accurate information also enables managers to track if surplus cows are available to sell in the next six months, or if additional cattle need to be purchased to keep the facility full.

If you would like more information about how to record this valuable information, please talk with your DHI Field Technician.



# Pregnancy Test Now Available from AgSource

AgSource is offering dairy and beef producers a new option in bovine pregnancy diagnosis. DG29™, developed by Conception Animal Reproduction Technologies of Beaumont, Quebec, is an easy-to-use bovine blood pregnancy test where blood samples are drawn from cattle on the farm or ranch, forwarded to a certified laboratory, and pregnancy diagnosis results are returned to the farm quickly and accurately.

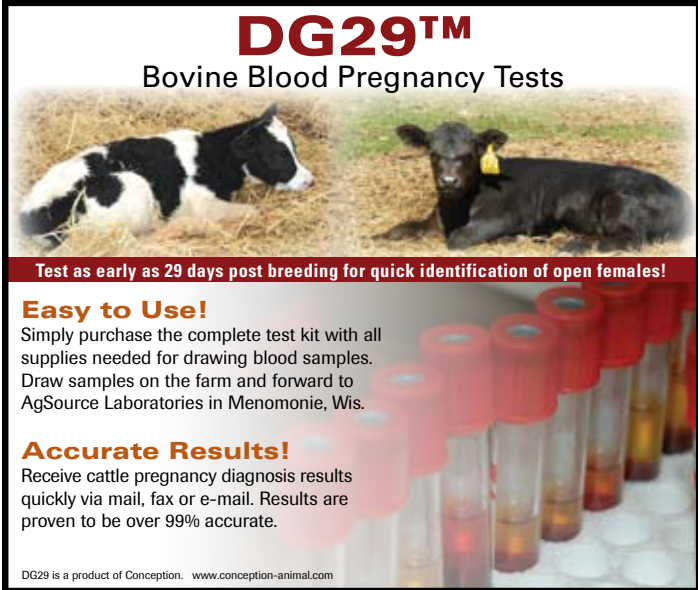
The DG29 test analysis, conducted at AgSource Laboratories in Menomonie, Wis., utilizes ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) technology to detect a specific pregnancy-related protein within the bovine's blood sample. Based on the presence or lack of presence of the pregnancy-related protein, positive (pregnant) or negative (open) results are reported. DG29 has been shown to be over 99 percent accurate according to research published in the Canadian Veterinary Journal.

For best results, the test should be conducted on cows or heifers 29 days or more post breeding. Cows must also be at least 90 days post calving before blood samples are collected.

AgSource offer producers two DG29 pregnancy test purchasing options - the complete test kit or individual kit

items. The complete test kit includes the required red-topped blood tubes, disposable needles, needle holder, hazardous material shipping containers and the test analysis.

DG29 test kits and related individual items can be purchased by contacting your local DHI technician or by contacting AgSource at 800-236-0097.



**DG29™**  
Bovine Blood Pregnancy Tests

Test as early as 29 days post breeding for quick identification of open females!

**Easy to Use!**  
Simply purchase the complete test kit with all supplies needed for drawing blood samples. Draw samples on the farm and forward to AgSource Laboratories in Menomonie, Wis.

**Accurate Results!**  
Receive cattle pregnancy diagnosis results quickly via mail, fax or e-mail. Results are proven to be over 99% accurate.

DG29 is a product of Conception. [www.conception-animal.com](http://www.conception-animal.com)

# Iowa Soil Laboratory Acquired By AgSource

On August 1, AgSource acquired LGI, a soil testing laboratory business located in Ellsworth, Iowa. The laboratory is the largest soil laboratory in the state, and one of the largest in the country. It offers extensive soil, water and environmental testing services to clients in Iowa and surrounding states. LGI analyzed over 300,000 soil samples in 2009. As part of the purchase, the former owners, Mike and Terry Lindaman, will remain with the business in management positions, and eighteen other LGI employees are also joining the AgSource/CRI team.

LGI is located north of Des Moines and approximately 45 miles southeast of the AgSource laboratory in Belmond, Iowa. The cooperative intends to operate both facilities without material changes in operation through the end of 2010 in order to prevent any disruption to client services during the critical fall soil testing season when, on peak

days, over 10,000 samples can be delivered to the two laboratories for testing. Plans will be established and implemented in early 2011 to allow more efficiency from the Iowa operations.

"We are pleased with this exciting new addition to AgSource which now projects the cooperative into a position as one of the largest soil testing businesses in the country," stated Pete Giacomini Chief Operating Officer of AgSource. "The addition of LGI allows us to not only better serve the needs of Iowa customers, but also strengthens our laboratory services throughout the entire area we serve." In addition to Belmond and Ellsworth, Agsource offers soil testing services at laboratories in Nebraska, Oregon and Wisconsin.

# Evaluating Herd Reproductive Performance

Improving a herd's reproductive management can affect many parts of the dairy operation. Cows milk more in early lactation, so keeping a higher percentage of cows in that stage will produce more milk and in turn raise everything from average pounds of milk per day to rolling herd average. At the same time, improving reproductive performance means lower turnover as less open cows will be sold for beef. This also can reduce the number of long dry periods and reduce the number of over conditioned cows. Finally, improved reproductive performance means more heifer calves which can lead to extra cash from replacement sales for dairy and at the same time provide better genetics for the herd.

On the back page of the Herd Summary, a good deal of information can be found that tells not only how to improve reproductive management

in a herd, but also compares the information to other herds. If all breeding dates and pregnancy examination results are not provided to AgSource, this information will not be accurate.

A good place to start to evaluate reproduction information is Block L. Here, three very important pieces of information, pregnancy rate, service rate and pregnancy loss are given along with trends. Time increments of 21 days can be found along the bottom of the graph.

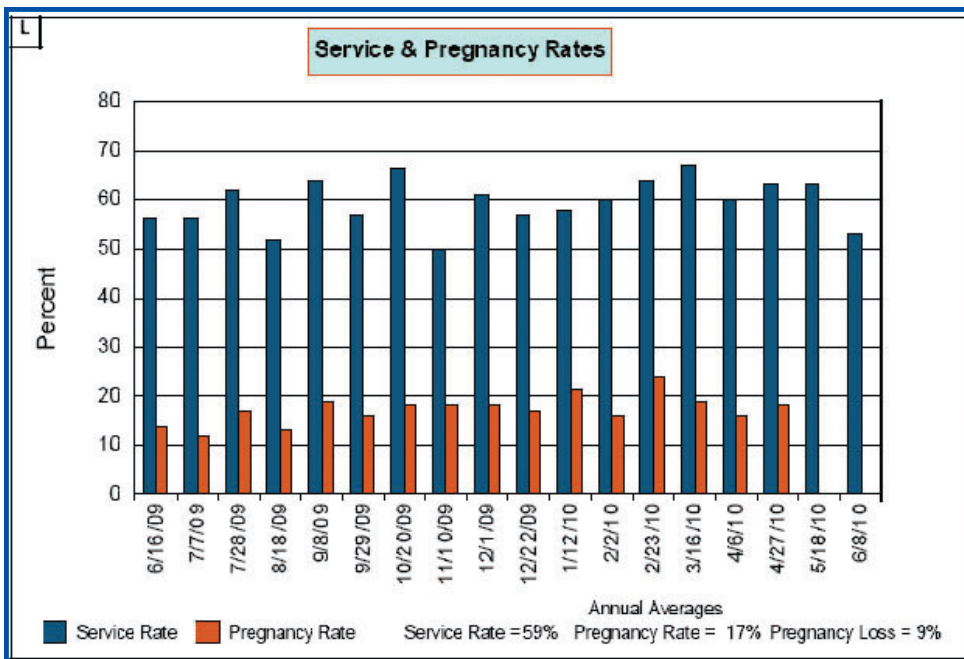
Pregnancy Rate is the most important number for evaluating reproductive performance. In the example herd there is a 17% Pregnancy Rate which means that over the past year in the average 21 day increment, 17% of the cows eligible to become pregnant became pregnant. The Pregnancy Rate is the orange bar in the graph. Notice

how the example herd had very low Pregnancy Rates last summer, then there was a considerable improvement through the February test day and since then performance has slipped. Pregnancy Rates of 20% or higher are considered good, while 13-14% is considered average.

If the Pregnancy Rate is not as high as desired, a good place to start is Service Rate. This is the number of cows bred in each 21 day increment divided by the number that are eligible to be bred. Cows don't get pregnant unless they are bred, meaning that it is critical that Service Rate is above 65% for a sound reproductive program.

Raising the Service Rate by ten percentage points in the example herd most likely raise the Pregnancy Rate up to 20% or higher, resulting in a significant increase in profitability. Raising the Service Rate requires managers to increase the frequency that open cows receive semen. Implementing an aggressive synchronization protocol or tail chalking regime combined with earlier pregnancy checks are good ways to increase the Service Rate.

If a cow that was confirmed pregnant is rebred or is reported open, that is considered a Pregnancy Loss. Typically, Annual Pregnancy Loss figures are in the 10-15% range. Members with higher numbers should work with their veterinarian and nutritionist to solve this profit drain.



**AgSource**  
Cooperative Services

A subsidiary of Cooperative Resources International  
135 Enterprise Drive • P. O. Box 930230  
Verona, WI 53593