

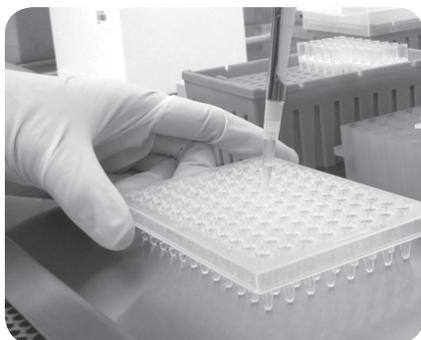
Pregnancy Milk Test Now Available

A convenient, reliable and cost-effective pregnancy test can now be done using the routine DHI sample.

Dairy producers have long known that improving Pregnancy Rates and reducing Days Open can have a significant economic impact. For that reason, finding those open cows and returning them to service quickly is a key component of successful reproductive programs. The new milk test from DHI now provides another tool to help find those open cows.

The test is based on simple ELISA technology detecting the level of pregnancy associated glycoproteins (PAGs). PAGs are produced when a cow is pregnant and rise in concentration in blood and milk as the gestation progresses. This technology is similar to what is being used in commercially available blood pregnancy tests. Blood based tests for pregnancy specific proteins have been available to producers for several years. The milk test just takes it to the next step.

In addition to being validated by the manufacturer (IDEXX Laboratories, Inc.), the test kit performed very well in a Canadian study. The study of nearly 700 animals was



led by Dr. Stephen LeBlanc of the University of Guelph and targeted cows 60 days+ post breeding with the use of routinely collected metered DHI samples.

Richard Cantin, Manager of Customer Service for DHI indicates that convenience will be a key selling point of this new test. "Sample collection is already done as part of our regular service which means that there is no need to handle cows. It doesn't get any easier than that." He adds, "on the other hand, DHI test intervals do not fit well with the need for routine early diagnosis,

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so the test is better suited for 60+ days in gestation, making it an ideal test for pregnancy reconfirmation, as a supplement to early diagnosis by the herd veterinarian." For that reason, DHI is marketing the test under the name 'ReCheck 60', which describes well how the test can best be used.

Producers have the ability to test selected cows, or enroll on a Recheck and/or Dry Off option where on each test day, cows that meet a herd specific criteria for days since last breeding, will automatically be pregnancy milk tested. "The testing choices are very flexible and it's up to each producer to decide which testing options will best meet their needs" says Cantin.

Reproduction continues to be the #1 reason cows leave the herd so anything that can be done to improve the situation will no doubt be welcomed. Dairy producer Ben Loewith of Summitholm Holsteins in Lynden, Ontario sees some benefits to this new testing option. "Reproduction and longevity is a priority for us, so we want to find those open cows as soon as we can so we can rebreed them. I like this new service from DHI. It's another tool and as a recheck I see a nice fit for our herd."

Results are reported in three categories: Pregnant, Recheck Open and Recheck Inconclusive, with a recommendation that all Recheck Open and Recheck Inconclusive cows be monitored for signs of heat and/or presented to the herd veterinarian for confirmation, prior to taking any action.

A copy of the test results will automatically be sent to the herd veterinarian and DHI encourages producers to work closely with their veterinarian to develop a reproductive management program that fits their herd, and to determine the appropriate pregnancy milk testing plan and test results interpretation.

Cantin concludes, 'eventually all open cows get identified. Either very quickly or unfortunately sometimes only after several weeks, and the odd time in the dry pen. The milk test is another tool that can help find some of those cows sooner, rather than later.'

ReCheck 60 service is available to all CanWest DHI producers starting in early 2013. For more information, talk to your veterinarian or your DHI representative.

ReCheck⁶⁰

Pregnancy Confirmation Milk Test

Why use ReCheck 60?

IT'S ACCURATE!

The test kit has been validated by the manufacturer at 35 days+ post breeding, with high sensitivity and specificity. In a Canadian study, targeting cows 60 days+ post breeding, the milk test kit using routine DHI samples performed very well with similar results.

IT'S EASY & COST-EFFECTIVE!

ReCheck 60 is based on simple, cost-effective ELISA technology. Sample collection is already done as part of regular DHI service, so there is no need to handle cows.

The test is best suited for 60+ days in gestation, making it an ideal test for rechecks, as a supplement to early diagnosis by the herd veterinarian, and for dry off checks.

IT PAYS!

As a Recheck:

- Reduce days Open and save dollars per day
- Rebreed cows before they are too late in lactation, which means fewer culls and lower replacement costs

As a Dry Off check:

- Save dry cow treatment costs
- Save feed costs during dry period (\$3 to \$5 per day)
- Milk the cow for a period of time and generate significant milk revenue, or sell her without delay
- Have the peace of mind that cows have been reconfirmed pregnant prior to moving to the dry area

IT'S FLEXIBLE!

Producers have the ability to either:

- Test selected cows or
- Enroll on an automatic Recheck and/or Dry-Off option, whereby on each test day, cows that meet a herd specific criteria for days since last breeding will be pregnancy tested.

Chairman's Comments



As I talk to dairy farmers, reproduction seems to be a constant focus and an area many of us would like to improve upon. Day-to-day reproduction, whether it be heat detection, breeding cows, herd health visits, trouble shooting issues, etc. takes considerable time and is a major priority of what we do from a herd management perspective.

I've heard many times from producers that getting cows pregnant in a timely fashion is the most important thing they can do, and from there, good milk production and overall herd performance will fall into place. It has been well documented that reproductive performance has a significant impact on profitability, so no wonder it is such a focus for our farms.

Often heifer reproductive programs take a back seat. Unfortunately that ends up costing many of us and our industry overall. With the average age at 1st calving in the 26-28 months range, improvements are possible. DHI and other data clearly show that calving at 24 months does not impact negatively on 1st lactation or lifetime production. We have seen very little improvements in this area in the last 10-15 years, which is to me an incredible missed opportunity.

On the cow side, I think our genetics industry has done a good job of putting focus and emphasis on fertility and reproduction. At CanWest DHI, we've worked hard at promoting concepts and measures of reproductive efficiency as well as providing tools to help producers. Pregnancy Rate has become the gold standard in measuring reproductive performance. With the help of vet schools, veterinarians and industry partners, DHI has been instrumental in bringing the concept of Pregnancy Rate to Canada. Another important step was to make Dairy Comp available to the industry with a solid infrastructure of sales and support and that has been achieved successfully.

We are now providing another tool – a pregnancy milk test called ReCheck 60. Each farm situation is different and the fit for this new test will be different for different farms. I encourage you to consider how this new service from DHI could be valuable on your farm. We know that finding open cows and quickly returning them to service pays off. For many of us, this new test can help us do just that.

Ed Friesen

Ed Friesen is a dairy producer from Kleefer, Manitoba