# Dairy Comp - 10 Years Later

## Software simplifies herd management complexities

It's been 10 years since CanWest DHI chose Dairy Comp as the software best suited to its internal needs and herd management for dairy farmers and advisors. Turns out it was an excellent choice. The creators, Valley Agricultural Software of Tulare, CA, have kept improving the product and now have a commanding lead.

The choice wasn't simple and was made only after thorough investigation, help from a committee and some trips to see various software packages in operation on large and small farms in the U.S and Canada.

"Even then, Dairy Comp was a clear market leader on herd management," says Richard Cantin of CanWest DHI. That made it an excellent fit with the Ontario and Western Canadian DHI's vision (now CanWest DHI).

### Terrific troubleshooter
Bill Wyntjes of Red Deer, AB says his father and four brothers began using DHI in 1973 mainly for herd management rather than a Record-of-Performance service to verify milk production and butterfat. When Dairy Comp came along, it worked extremely well for them, given their emphasis on management. At the time Wyntjes was struggling with herd reproductive performance issues and Dairy Comp helped him analyze his data and to track down the reasons.
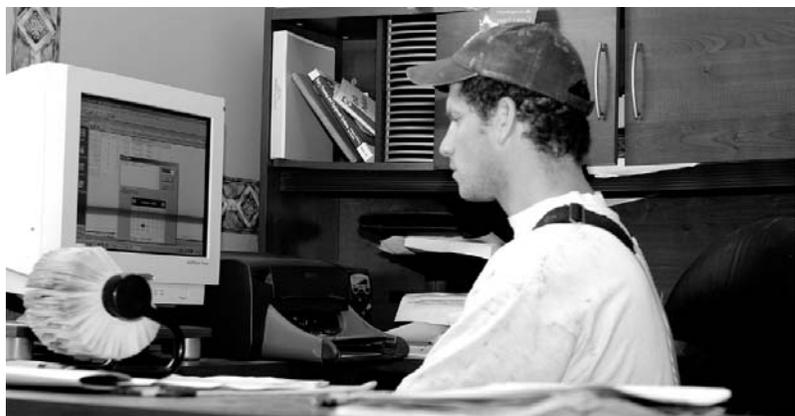


*Ben Loewith of Summitholm Farms uses Dairy Comp Herd Management Software extensively to help him manage his herd.*

It also helped that his oldest son, Dustin, was a big fan of Dairy Comp. He took a university course on the program and uses it to manage a dairy farm in California.

> ### "Every dairy farmer should be using either Dairy Comp 305 or Dairy Comp SCOUT."
> *Bill Wyntjes, Dairy Farmer*
> *Red Deer, AB*

Wyntjes says a seminar he attended in California to learn about managing problem breeders showed him how to use his computerized records. What Dairy Comp did for reproductive performance turned out to be only a small part of its overall benefits.

Wyntjes uses it today to get touch-of-the-fingertip data on which cows need a veterinary check during Monday visits, to make culling decisions and to pinpoint a broad range of management issues. For example, during a recent interview it took him only seconds to determine that seven cows had died in the 400-head herd during the last year, none of them since January.

Wyntjes said every dairy farmer should be using either Dairy Comp 305 or the Dairy Comp SCOUT version for small and mid-size herds. "It's a no brainer to have a tool like that," he says.

## Dairy Comp (Continued from page 1)

CanWest DHI first used Dairy Comp software for fieldstaff in 1996 and in 1997 began on-farm installations. Charles Bennett of Rideauside Farms Inc., in Kemptville was the first DHI install and remains a fan of the service. He uses the program daily to prepare worksheets for his herd of 220 milking Holsteins and to prepare a list of the cows his veterinarian needs to check during his visits every two weeks. Both his veterinarian and nutritionist use Dairy Comp, so there's a seamless fit with Bennett's records.

His CanWest DHI field service representative has been using Dairy Comp to electronically register his purebred Holsteins. And Bennett said having Dairy Comp saves a lot of time during fieldstaff visits.

### A team approach
Dr. Doug Bazinet of Bazinet Livestock Health Services at Steinbach, MB began using Dairy Comp long before it was picked up by DHI and was familiar with its benefits, such as tracking trends for mastitis and reproductive performance. He's able to help his clients get on top of issues before they become costly challenges.

His Advisor version of Dairy Comp (suited for veterinarians and nutritionists) enables him to download and analyze clients' DHI records before he comes out to the farm and he uses his laptop to show clients where improvements will pay dividends.

A few have found the "cow value" section in the software helpful and he works with them shoulder-to-shoulder as they ponder whether a cow ought to be culled. "Like any program, there's a learning curve to go through," he said of Dairy Comp, "but there's enough (software programming) in there to answer any problem you put to it."

DHI's fieldstaff and Dairy Comp support staff continue to coach farmers how to set up the system, help them learn its features and offer maintenance service. Every year, both Valley Ag and DHI make improvements or add services such as electronic registration for Holsteins and integration with the Canadian Quality Milk Program developed by Dairy Farmers of Canada. Upgrades and support come as part of the ongoing package for clients.

### Improvements keep coming
The arrival of hand-held devices for use in the barn has been welcomed on many dairy farms because it eliminates the extra step of writing things down. Cantin says work is underway now to add electronic scanning of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags. Once that's in place, armed with a hand-held device, herd managers will be able to identify each cow and check computer data for information.
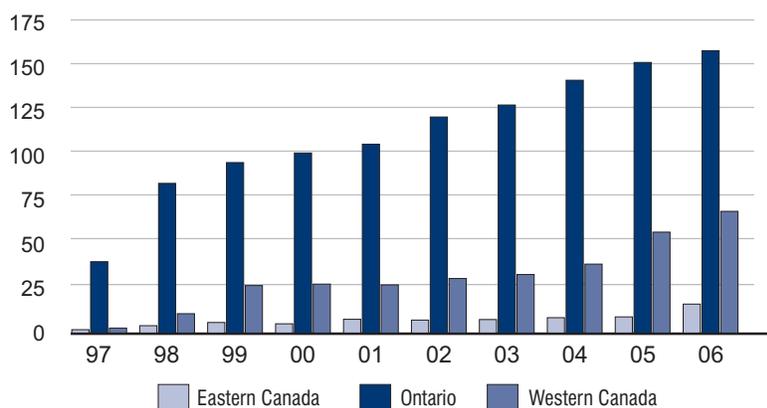
In the fast-moving world of dairy farming these are some of the dairy farmers and their support staff who have found that it's a joy to have up-to-the-minute software from Dairy Comp working 24-7 on their toughest management challenges.

A lot has happened in 10 years and much is yet to come in the next 10!

**Number of Herds Using Dairy Comp Products by Year**



Legend: Eastern Canada | Ontario | Western Canada
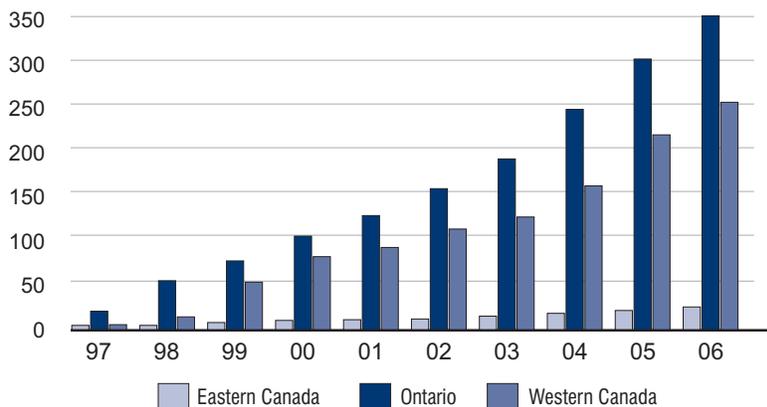
**Number of Dairy Advisors Using Dairy Comp Products by Year**



Legend: Eastern Canada | Ontario | Western Canada

**Dairy Comp®**
Herd Management Software.

# Ten Years With Dairy Comp

2006 represents the tenth year that Canwest DHI (formerly Ontario DHI and Western Canadian DHI Services) has been using Dairy Comp Herd Management software at the farm for data input of milk weights and herd events as well as providing management reports back to our customers on test day.

Dairy Comp products have proven to be effective and flexible in managing all sizes of operations. Large herds, with Dairy Comp 305 software fully integrated with milk meters, sort gates and other parlour functions, download herd events and milk weights directly into the DHI system for processing. On farms with smaller cow numbers, the economical Dairy Comp SCOUT version is being used for efficient herd management.

This version is also capable of downloading herd events into the DHI system.

Dairy Comp 305 has recently been approved by the Canadian Quality Milk Program (CQM) for the recording of treatments within the herd. The SCOUT program will also have this capability in the near future. This will greatly assist Dairy Comp users with the CQM validation process on their farms.

Currently 20% of the cows on the DHI program are being managed with on farm Dairy Comp software. I believe that many more producers could benefit by using a Dairy Comp program to manage their herd inventories.

Our challenge at Canwest DHI is to make more of our customers aware of how these programs can assist them in managing their herds more efficiently than they are today.

RAY LAING,
CHAIRMAN, CANWEST DHI

## Late in Your Registrations? We can help!

Your DHI Customer Service Representative can register your calves/cows with Holstein Canada electronically on test day. If you already provide your breeding information to DHI, your CSR will only need the name of the calf, the EZE-IR/NLID tag number and the management number of the calf to complete the registration application. Benefits include:

- Accurate, timely registrations at any purity level
- No more paperwork for registrations
- No more late fees for registrations
- A $3.00 Per-Application discount from Holstein Canada

Detailed information and DHI fees for this service are available from your CSR.

## New DHI Sample Box Means Cost Efficiency

A new sample box was introduced earlier this spring. The new 64 vial box is now the standard box for all five CanWest provinces (British Columbia to Ontario). Sample vials have also been standardized across all provinces to the vial type that was already being used in British Columbia and Ontario.

These changes mean economies of scale and increased purchasing power for DHI. In the end, it translates to better cost control and stable DHI fees for our customers.

## ONTARIO

### CanWest DHI Annual Meeting

Tuesday, January 9, 2007
Registration: 12:00 PM
Meeting: 1:00 PM
Fairmont Royal York,
Toronto, Ontario

## WEST

**New Equipment for Edmonton Lab**

In an ongoing effort to provide complete and efficient service, DHI has invested in new laboratory equipment in the milk-testing lab in Edmonton.



The new state of the art equipment, which efficiently analyzes for Fat, Protein and SCC, was needed in order to replace aging equipment. The new equipment can also provide Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) analysis, eliminating the need to send MUN samples to the Guelph Lab. The end result is reliable, cost effective analytical services for the dairy industry. Congratulations to Lab Manager John Komarnicki and his staff for a smooth and seamless transition.

## Johne's Disease Project - $400 Grant Still Available



The CanAdvance Johne's project is progressing very well. To date, herd enrolment in the project is about 75% complete.

To be part of the Johne's project, you must:

a) Fill out a questionnaire.
b) Milk test the herd for Johne's Disease (using the routine DHI sample if on DHI or collecting milk samples if not on regular DHI).
c) Have your veterinarian complete an on-farm Johne's Disease 'Risk Assessment' specific for your farm.

In return, you will receive a $400.00 payment from DHI and farm specific recommendations on Johne's control from your veterinarian.

Interested in enrolling in this project? Space and funding is limited so contact your veterinarian today.

## Turn Around Time (Continued from page 6)

All of the data that is received is subject to rigorous and thorough checks and balances to maintain integrity and accuracy. If the data does not pass these safeguards it must be examined manually. The Edit Department at Head Office routinely examine and make corrections to such things as extreme differences in milk weights, abnormally high or low values or extraordinary test day events that you have asked your field staff to flag. The vast majority of herd data passes through the system without intervention but these outstanding occurrences must also be factored into what makes up our expectations.

Finally, the data is processed and reports are printed and ready to mail. The function of accepting data, creating records and reports and then printing them continues 24 hours a day or as long as there is data to process. Mailroom personnel are kept busy throughout the day receiving the printed reports, acting on special requests for those reports, stuffing envelopes, affixing postage and transporting the completed mail to the post office. Including diskettes, CDs and barn cards are all additional tasks to be added to the regular handling of the reports. Once all relevant tasks are completed the mail is given to Canada Post for distribution across the country.

These are but a few of the factors that can affect your DHI records from sampling through to mailing. It's important to keep them in mind and recognize what effect they might have the next time you are wondering, 'Where is my DHI information?'

## Interpreting DHI Reports Quickly

BILL GREXTON, DHI HERD MANAGEMENT SERVICES

With the ability of Canadian DHI to add flexibility and many options to its service package in 2000, one of the many comments is "There is too much paper and too many numbers." Over the past number of issues we have tried to explain each of the management reports in this section to show you the details and value of each report.

In this column, we will show you how to go through ALL your reports in under five minutes, and find all the key items that need action.

This is a suggested method of looking at these reports to best understand the herd situation. Use a pen or marker on your sheets or make a list of animals that need attention.

### 1. Hotsheet Report
This report shows all animals outside industry norms for several key measures.
- Check first to see if there is a trend (are animals there for the same reason?).
- Determine if there needs to be individual intervention (such as high SCC - if so, act), or more investigation to find the reason for the trend.

The next two reports show herd and individual performance. First you need to check the herd for disturbing trends and then the progress of individual cows.

### 2. Herd Summary/Monitor
**Test Day Summary:** Check production consistency for kg Milk, % Fat, % Protein Standard Milk and BCA. Check Linear Score, Protein:Fat ratio and Calving Interval for changes or unacceptable levels.
**Lactation Group Profile:** Check production & BCA by lactation group. 1st Lactation animals should be higher in BCA (+5-10) & lower in actual milk.
**Stage of Lactation Profile:** Check production across various stages of lactation. The BCA's should be approximately the same in a "normal" situation.
**\*Optional columns:** What changes can you find? How important is it?
**\*Herd Management Centers (back of Monitor report):** Which management measure offers the greatest return. Are the goals realistic? Determine what is needed to help reach your goal.

### 3. Cow Summary/Monitor
**Test Day Data:** Check to see how many animals have Fat or Protein % less than 3.0. What stage of lactation are they? Why is it happening? Is it preventable?
**Lactation Information:** Check Fat & Protein %. How many have a lactation average that is too low? How many animals have DIM greater than 370?
**BCA:** How many animals have a large minus for BCAM. What is the reason?
**\*Other (monitor):** How many animals have days open greater than 150 or large decrease in BCA. Why?

*\* Over 100 measures are available only on "Monitor" reports. A recommendation is to make the optional choices for these columns relate to the most important goals for the herd.*

**Somatic Cell Count (SCC)** is a measure of the animal's response to infection in the udder. Individual animal LS is an indicator of the amount of milk loss that is associated with the SCC level due to the cow having to deal with the infection. Individual LS above 4.0 represents a significant economic loss and animals in this category should be examined. Herd average LS is a good indicator of overall herd udder health. Herds averages above 3.0LS should consider consulting a veterinarian/udder health specialist and making changes in milking management practices.

### 4. SCC Management List
Check which cows are largest contributors to the herd average SCC. What is their history? Is culturing, treating or culling the best option?

### 5. SCC Herd Summary Report
Check for changes in herd average SCC or LS in the following sections.
- **Herd Summary (top):** What % of herd is above 200,000 SCC? Why?
- **Herd Profile:** Check the trend across age and stages of lactation this month. Is there a trend? What groups have the highest score?

### 6. Cow Income Monitor
This report is the only report that will give economic evaluation of the individuals in the milking herd. Depending on what is in the optional columns (over 40 choices), this can make a great culling report. Set your standards and mark animals above or below the standard.

**Milk Value:** What is the range from top to bottom for each group? Why are the low animals low? How much greater is this amount than the difference between your herd and your province?
**Optional Columns:** What is the range from the high to low in each column? Which animals have the most highs or lows? Why? These 'lows' are your 'cull candidates'.

**Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN)** is a flag that shows the efficiency of the protein:energy dynamics of the rumen. Significant changes in MUN indicate the feeding program has changed and should be re-evaluated. NEVER make decisions based on one MUN result. Always use the average of a minimum of eight animals.

### 7. MUN Herd Summary
- **MUN History:** What is the trend (both in herd average, testing frequency and type of test), over the past two years?
- **Lactation Group Profile:** Of groups with more than eight animals do any trends show up?
- **Herd Scatter Graph:** What is the range of the majority of the animals? "Normal" is +/- 3.0 from the herd average.

There! Less than five minutes and you have a list of animals or management practices that need examining. The rest is up to you the manager.

CanWest DHI has produced a video, which goes over these items in more detail. If you would like more information about this video, please call 1-800-549-4373.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

### Turn Around Time

As technology advances and provides us with more and quicker tools to perform our tasks, our expectations rise as well. This is as true with milk recording as it is in many other fields. In light of rising expectations, it is useful to review the steps from sampling through to delivering the reports (or an electronic file). This will provide an understanding of how the data moves and who and what can affect its journey.

Everyone is familiar with the collecting of samples on test day. The DHI staff record the milk weight or weights for your cows and take a representative sample for each eligible animal. Once the data for each test is keyed in the field laptop computers, summary sheets are printed and boxed with the sample vials and readied for shipment to the DHI lab.

Your field staff carefully packs the boxes and do their utmost to ensure that all samples are received by the lab. Boxes of samples are sent by courier with next day service to the DHI labs. Samples taken and shipped on Tuesday are expected to arrive on Wednesday and be analyzed that same day. Sampling on a Friday or the weekend can affect turnaround time negatively as the samples may be held by the courier until the next business day. For example, samples shipped on Friday may not arrive at the lab until Monday or Tuesday. A long holiday weekend will also have an adverse effect on delivery. These variables as well as others like weather and pickup time will have an impact on the speed of delivery to the lab. Knowing the consequences of these helps us set realistic expectations when thinking of sample analysis time.

Once the samples are analyzed an electronic file is sent to the processing center. This lab file is matched to the electronic file created and sent to the processing center by your DHI field staff. These two pieces are matched up and if no problems exist the data is digested by the system and run through the many calculations to create your records and reports. Again there are some variables that can affect the flow of data through this process.

Your DHI field staff connects to the internet to transmit the data to the processing center. Weather, local internet service providers and even telephone lines can have an influence on the success of staff connecting to transmit their data. This is generally not an issue but many of us are aware of the challenges that electronic communications can face particularly from a rural locale.

## DAIRY COMP SUPPORT

### Software Feature that will save both time and money

Dairy Comp software has many features that will help a dairy producer manage his herd more efficiently. One feature in Dairy Comp 305 and SCOUT that continues to save time and money for producers is the electronic registration (E-reg), module. From a menu click, producers can quickly and easily complete a registration application for an animal and send it to Holstein Canada.

Registering animals with Dairy Comp is straightforward given the fact that calf ID, sire and dam information and breeding information have already been entered in the computer for each animal to be registered. All the information is compiled automatically when completing a registration application, making the process simple and efficient. Also, a digital phone can easily be included if desired. The transmission of the electronic application file can be done via a phone line dial out or over the internet.

Prior to submitting the first application, the user must define the herd settings to be used. This includes herd prefix, desired registration level, animal colour, semen supplier, and inseminator code. The program allows for multiple values for each setting. These settings can be altered at any time. Once the settings are defined and saved, the next submission only requires the user to select the animals that need to be registered

The E-reg module saves Dairy Comp users time and money. Time is saved because the registration applications are completed quickly and accurately using the information already in the computer. This avoids duplication and potential errors that the transfer of the animal's information to a paper application may cause.

Money is saved in two ways: you save $3.00 per application since your registration application is sent to Holstein Canada electronically and because registration applications are completed on time, late registration fees are avoided.

For more information on this or other software features, call DHI's Dairy Comp support line at 1-800-549-4373.