Defining the Dairy’s Goals for Heifer Rearing

Establishing a set of goals and finding out where the dairy is in relationship to those goals is the first step to making change. The purpose of this worksheet is to establish the farm’s current state of heifer rearing and build a set of goals to work towards. Not every factor listed will be important to every farm and not every farm is currently monitoring each of these parameters, but going through the process of writing values down and comparing them to some recommendations will help producers think about all the important stages in heifer rearing.

Where is the farm now?  What are the farm goals?

- Heifer ME305
- First lactation peak milk
- Age at first calving
- Body weight at calving
- Height of heifer at calving
- Age at first breeding
- Age at puberty
- Weaning age
- Average daily gain post-puberty
- Average daily gain pre-puberty
- Pre-weaning Heifer mortality
- Pre-weaning Diarrhea incidence
- Pre-weaning Pneumonia incidence
- Peri-natal mortality (1 to 48 hours)
- DOA (dead at birth)
- % Calves with serum total proteins >5.5
The following are some recommended heifer goals gleaned from the literature.

- **Heifer ME305**: Greater than the cows
- **First lactation peak milk**: About 75 to 80% of the cows
- **Age at first calving**: 22 to 24 months
- **Body weight at calving**: 1300-1350 lb for Holsteins, 900 lb for Jerseys
- **Height of heifer at calving**: 54-55 inches for Holsteins, 48-50 inches for Jerseys
- **Age at first breeding**: 12-13 months (51 inches tall Holsteins, 43 Jerseys)
- **Age at puberty**: 9 months (at 55% of mature body weight)
- **Weaning age**: 45 to 60 days (variable)
- **Average daily gain post-puberty**: 2 lb/day for Holsteins, 1.2 lb/day Jerseys
- **Average daily gain pre-puberty**: 2.0 to 2.2 lb/day Holsteins, 1.4 lb/day Jerseys
- **Pre-weaning Heifer mortality**: Less than 3% (variable)
- **Pre-weaning Diarrhea incidence**: Less than 25%
- **Pre-weaning Pneumonia incidence**: Less than 15%
- **Peri-natal mortality (1 to 48 hours)**: Less than 5%
- **DOA (dead at birth)**: Less than 8% Heifers, Less than 4% Cows
- **% Calves with serum total proteins >5.5**: More than 85%

**Resources**


Heinrichs J, Lammers B. Monitoring dairy heifer growth. The Pennsylvania State University. 1998. 5m498PS. Available at: [http://extension.psu.edu/animals/dairy/nutrition/heifers/monitoring-heifer-growth](http://extension.psu.edu/animals/dairy/nutrition/heifers/monitoring-heifer-growth)


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