

Using DC 305 to help your clients achieve success

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Abstract

Dairy Comp 305 is a dairy management software program designed to help producers manage the cows on their farm. It allows the user to record important pieces of information about each cow for later retrieval and use by dairy employees and consultants. Veterinarians, through their understanding of biology, animal husbandry and farm operations, are uniquely qualified to help producers utilize this program to manage their farms, monitor trends, and intervene quickly when problems arise. Additionally, management programs like Dairy Comp 305 will be critical in helping farms remain compliant with regulatory guidelines. Veterinarians can help farms design and implement data recording, generate “action” lists of cows requiring management intervention, provide concise and easy reports to evaluate disease trends, and regularly monitor reproduction and milk production. A sound understanding of dairy management software opens considerable opportunities for the engaged practitioner to demonstrate value and help their clients achieve success.

Key words: Dairy Comp 305, management, success

Résumé

Le logiciel de gestion de production laitière Dairy Comp 305 a été conçu pour aider les producteurs à prendre en charge les vaches dans leur ferme. Le logiciel permet à l'utilisateur d'enregistrer d'importantes informations sur chaque vache que les employés de la ferme et les consultants pourront accéder et utiliser plus tard. Les vétérinaires en raison de leurs connaissances en biologie et sur l'élevage des animaux et des opérations de la ferme sont uniquement qualifiés pour aider les producteurs à utiliser ce logiciel pour gérer leurs fermes, faire un suivi des tendances et intervenir rapidement lorsque des problèmes surgissent. De plus, des logiciels de gestion comme Dairy Comp 305 seront essentiels pour aider les fermes à demeurer conformes aux exigences réglementaires. Les vétérinaires peuvent aider les fermes à planifier et à mettre en œuvre l'enregistrement des données, à générer des listes d'action pour des vaches qui nécessitent des interventions de gestion, à créer des rapports brefs et pratiques pour l'évaluation des tendances de maladies et à surveiller régulièrement la reproduction et la production laitière. Une connaissance approfondie d'un logiciel de gestion de production laitière ouvre la voie à de nombreuses opportunités pour le praticien impliqué de prouver sa valeur et d'aider ses clients à réussir.

Recording Data

Proper data recording is the foundation of any record keeping system. Data should be recorded contemporaneously, consistently, and in a format that is easy to retrieve. In Dairy Comp 305, data about a specific cow is stored in 2 different forms: Items and Events.

Items are used for storing simple “facts” about an animal. There are 2 basic item classifications: Stored Items and Calculated Items. Stored Items record independent information about a cow that usually stays the same for that cow. Examples include ID number, birthdate, and Sire ID. Stored Items are also useful for data that may change each lactation such as calf total protein, fresh cow BHBA (β -hydroxybutyric acid), or calving ease score. Calculated Items are pieces of data that are determined by other factors in the cow's history. Calculated Items change over time and include information such as DIM (days-in-milk), DSLH (days since last heat), and DCC (days carried calf). Many Items come preprogrammed into Dairy Comp, however, flexibility exists to build new Items that are useful to the farm and practitioner. There are over 150 Item types that can be used for storing a wide variety of data. Item types can be viewed using the ALTER menu and selecting option 2 (Items). Once on the Items page, select ADD to begin building a new Item and display all of the Item types available. Item types include number ranges, alphanumeric codes, calculated dates, event descriptors, test day Items, daily milk Items, and average daily gain Items for youngstock. Consistency is important when building new Items. They should have a logical, easy to remember name and should be created and named the same way for all herds to help with consistency in data analysis. Understanding how to build Items and the types of Items available for use can be very important for the practitioner in helping the farm record and evaluate important information.

An Event is something that happens to a cow. Events can be related to a management action (FRESH, BRED, DRY, SOLD) or a disease (DA, RP, MAST (mastitis)). Unlike Items, where only 1 piece of data can be stored, Events allow for more data to be stored or calculated. For example, data regarding the date of an Event, the DIM at an Event, the month an Event occurred, and the number of occurrences of an Event are all recorded. This information can be critical to describing and understanding the dynamics of the Event. Dairy Comp allows for a total of 63 Events. The first 18 Events are fixed in Dairy Comp and should not be changed. If a dairy is not utilizing all 63 Events, new Events can be created using the ALTER menu, selecting option 9 (User Defined Events) and clicking the ADD button. If there is a desire to create a new Event and

the dairy is utilizing all their Events, contact support personnel and have a discussion with the farm to determine if any Events can be repurposed. It is important to utilize support personnel to make certain that this is done properly without negative effects on other data being recorded.

It is critical for data to be recorded consistently. Perhaps the best area for recording consistency can be found in the example of recording disease Events. Some disease Events, such as DIED, are recorded consistently on almost all dairies. Others, such as MAST (mastitis), RP (retained placenta) or KETOSIS can be recorded differently across farms and among farm workers on a specific farm. Depending upon the dairy, MAST may be used to record any cow with clinical mastitis (abnormal milk) or any animal that has an udder health issue based on some other test (CMT (California Mastitis Test)-positive animals, animals with a high conductivity or animals with a high test-day somatic cell score) in addition to animals with just clinical mastitis. Some dairies may reserve the MAST event for only animals that are being treated for clinical mastitis. It is easy to see how the incidence of MAST would vary widely across these 3 scenarios. Similarly, some dairies may use RP to record any animal that is being treated as a result of the RP while others may record any animal with retained fetal membranes present 24 hours after calving. Again, these approaches could drastically change the incidence of RP and create confusion when evaluating farms. Establishing clear case definitions for each disease and properly training employees is vital to accurately recording data. Keeping case definitions consistent across farms allows the consultant to accurately summarize disease for comparison and benchmarking.

Improving data integrity on the dairy is essential for quick and accurate data recording and retrieval. Working with data collection systems and data recording can help the practitioner demonstrate value to the producer and creates additional opportunities for on-farm training, protocol development, and data analysis.

Routine Action Lists

There are many tasks to perform on the farm each day. Developing lists of cows for dry off, foot trimming, vaccination, and synchronization program injections, for example, needs to be done quickly and reliably, allowing farm staff to spend less time in front of a computer and more time working with cows. Veterinarians are often very involved in designing management protocols for farms, but less involved in helping the farm with the logistics of accomplishing these tasks. Utilizing Dairy Comp to generate lists of animals requiring management intervention can be a great way to ensure compliance and help the dairy be more efficient. Lists can be created to include important information, such as cow ID and pen number, that employees need to find cows. Additional information can also be included to help the employees make decisions about an animal's value or risk for disease. One ex-

ample of this would include listing milk production, DIM, and lactation on a list of animals due for pregnancy examination. This information could help make the decision of whether a cow diagnosed "open" should be re-enrolled in an estrus synchronization program for rebreeding. Another example would be listing previous cases of mastitis and somatic cell history on a list of cows due to be dried off. These items can be useful in determining a cow's risk for subclinical mastitis infection in herds interested in utilizing a selective dry-cow therapy program.

Lists of cows that are "out of compliance" with herd protocols are also very helpful for farms. Such lists include cows past a predetermined voluntary wait period or heifers past a certain age that haven't been serviced, animals above a certain number of days carried calf that haven't been dried off or above a certain number of days carried calf that haven't calved or animals that are past their milk residue date and are therefore eligible to be evaluated for a move from the hospital pen to a milking pen. These types of lists help farms identify animals out of compliance with farm protocols that would benefit from immediate action. Generating lists of cows for herd management and intervention provides an excellent opportunity for the practitioner to help dairies accomplish routine tasks and improve efficiency.

Routine Reports

Veterinarians must be able to review farm performance quickly and confidently. Early recognition of changes in disease rates, reproductive performance, and production can be critical. Routinely reviewing farm performance is essential to picking up changes early. Practitioners should make a list of key areas on the farm that are important to monitor. These parameters should be easy to retrieve, quick to change, reflect current conditions on the farm, not be influenced by historical performance, and minimally biased by other events on the dairy.

Most practitioners do not visit each of their clients daily. As such, there is a need at the beginning of each scheduled visit to quickly review the herd's history since the last visit and identify areas of opportunity. In herds with individual ID and daily milk weight data, daily and weekly production information can be helpful to track changes to cow performance. Reports summarizing events that occurred on the dairy allow for monitoring of management activity as well as disease history. Using this report can help the practitioner identify any change in the number of animals freshening, bred, dried-off or sold for example, as well as identify any change in the amount of disease. Examples of additional reports include a review of maternity pen management, youngstock disease rates, breeding, and health. These reports can all be programmed into easy to run commands that provide the practitioner with an accessible, consistent and reliable account of farm performance, allowing the focus to shift from "what happened" to "why did it happen and how can we fix it."

GUIDE is a section of Dairy Comp that contains numerous preprogrammed reports. It is accessible by typing GUIDE into the command line and provides a wide variety of reports, graphs, and tables for evaluating different areas of the dairy. Dairy Comp users less comfortable with generating their own commands, as well as more experienced users, can benefit from exploring the reports within GUIDE.

Treatment Protocols

Society demands that animal agriculture employ principles of prudent drug use. FDA guidelines, prescription laws, and FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) program updates require veterinary oversight and monitoring of pharmaceutical use on farms. Designing on-farm treatment protocols, training farm staff, and monitoring compliance all require veterinary involvement, clear communication, and an easy and reliable system for implementation. Dairy Comp can be instrumental in this process. The ALTER menu option 7 (Protocols) provides access to a Protocol table, allowing the user to enter disease-specific treatment plans. Data including the condition being treated, drug and dose to be used, duration of therapy and milk and meat residue information can be entered for each protocol. This data should match the written on-farm treatment protocols and assists the farm in maintaining protocol compliance. When disease events and

treatment regimens are properly entered into Dairy Comp, a daily action list of cows requiring therapy can be generated, ensuring that animals receive the treatment they need each day. Customized reports of disease history and protocol usage can also be generated to monitor protocol compliance. The new Cow Care module of Dairy Comp provides additional opportunity to inventory drugs on farm, deducting drug use from current inventory, and providing for complete drug traceability.

Summary

Veterinarians have an opportunity to be involved not only in the development of management and therapeutic protocols, but also to help the farm accomplish these tasks. Veterinarians play a vital role in helping farms identify disease and performance trends, generate action lists for management tasks, identify animals not in compliance with farm protocols, and meet the growing requirements of regulatory agencies. On-farm management software such as Dairy Comp 305 are essential to performing these tasks and providing these services to clients.