

The National Dairy Heifer Evaluation Project: A Profile of Heifer Management Practices in the United States

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The National Dairy Heifer Evaluation Project was a cooperative, USDA-sponsored project involving state agricultural departments, the Cooperative Extension Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. A series of retrospective and prospective descriptive surveys using a multiple list and area frame sampling technique were conducted. Information collected pertained primarily to dairy neonates and replacement heifers. Much of the study was related to observational information on health and management characteristics that can be related to the animals' long-term physical and economic performance. The data reflect herds representing 78% of the national dairy cow population. Average herd size was 86 milking and dry cows and 66 heifers. Many characteristics of these herds reflect accepted and recommended practices in the area of dairy replacement management and nutrition. Data summarized in this national study can be utilized to evaluate the impact of management practices on dairy operations.

Key Words: calf management • heifer • management • health • national survey

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