Grade herd recording, 1963-64

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GRADE HERD RECORDING, 1963-64

By M. CULLITY, Chief, Dairying Division

A review of Grade Herd Recording during the 1963-64 season.

THERE was a substantial increase in the number of cows which were recorded in 1963-64 compared with 1962-63 (23,520 and 22,635 respectively). This season's figure represents 20.4 per cent. of all cows in the dairying districts. The number of cows which completed lactation and therefore whose yields were included in the averages, rose from 17,258 to 19,011.

As a result of the unfavourable season, particularly the extended and heavy winter of 1963, yields were lower than in the previous two years. The average was 564 gallons of milk, 235 lb. butterfat at 4.2 per cent.

The average yield of the cows in the units within the milk zone was higher than those in the butterfat districts. Cows in the whole milk zone produced an average of 659 gallons of milk, 262 lb. butterfat at 4.0 per cent. while in the butterfat districts the average was 509 gallons of milk, 218 lb. butterfat at 4.3 per cent.

There were 23 units with 477 herds. Herd size has gradually increased and the average was 49 cows. The average number of cows in each unit was 1,022.

As in previous years, those herds which had been kept under test continuously for a number of years had higher averages than those which were tested a few times only. For example, in the milk zone units, those which had been tested for the fourth time averaged 268 lb. of butterfat whereas those which were tested for the first time yielded only 208 lb. The respective yields of milk were 661 and 520 gallons. Similar differences were recorded in the butterfat districts. Fifty herds tested for the first time had an average yield of 192 lb. of butterfat, while those tested for the 3rd time produced 222 lb.

This was the first occasion on which yields after various periods of continuous testing were calculated separately for the whole milk zone herds and for those from which butterfat only is sold for manufacture.

Value of Continuous Testing

The value of continuous testing is far more apparent in the whole milk zone. The results for the butterfat herds, while showing an upward trend, are relatively disappointing; even after a lengthy period, many herds are still producing at too low a level.

This is a situation which could be a fruitful avenue for investigation.

The table opposite shows that over all units the highest yields of butterfat were recorded for those cows with the highest butterfat percentage. It will be noted that the Friesian results show a levelling out of butterfat yield beyond the 3.6 to 4.0 per cent. range. There were few cows of this breed in the higher ranges.

An examination of the data for the relationship of milk yield according to butterfat test showed a trend to lower yields with the higher test ranges. This
Average yield of butterfat according to breed and percentage test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breed</th>
<th>Under 3.2%</th>
<th>3.3%</th>
<th>3.6%</th>
<th>4.1%</th>
<th>4.6%</th>
<th>5.1%</th>
<th>5.5%</th>
<th>Over 5.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.I.S.</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guernsey</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>283</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesian</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>279</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

was most apparent with the Friesian breed.

While the downward trend is noticeable with the Australian Illawarra Shorthorn, Jersey and Guernsey breeds, it is not as pronounced and justifies the comment that for butterfat yield the achievement of a high percentage will not be balanced by a corresponding drop in milk yields but will be accompanied by a rise in the total yield of butterfat.

The Brunswick unit had the highest average yield with 980 cows averaging 711 gallons and 291 lb. butterfat. The average test was 4.1 per cent. The next best was Walpole where 791 cows averaged 568 gallons and 289 lb. of butterfat with a test of 5.1 per cent.

There was a slight decline in the average length of lactation from 7.8 months in the previous year to 7.6 months. This, however, is almost a full month longer than when this data was originally calculated some 10 years ago.

The value of maintaining cows in milk for full lactation was again demonstrated:

16.6 per cent. of all cows completed 300 days with an average yield of 789 gallons milk and 331 lb. butterfat;

19.5 per cent. completed 270 days and yielded 661 gallons milk and 277 lb. butterfat.

The best unit was Brunswick where those cows which completed 300 days averaged 923 gallons of milk and 376 lb butterfat.

In the butterfat districts, those cows which calved during the months from December to May produced more than those which calved at other periods of the year. The spread of the best calving months was greater than in previous years. This was probably due to the adverse effect upon the production of those cows which calved early in the winter and therefore could not maintain full yields during that difficult period.

The relationship between butterfat percentage and total yield of butterfat was shown to be very important. In the butterfat districts, highest yields were obtained where the average butterfat percentage was highest.
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