Abstract by jay Mattison - Characteristics of the USA dairy herd as related to management and demographic elements

The data characteristics of the United States dairy herd related to animals enrolled in milk recording (dairy herd improvement) are the basic foundation and important influencers for the management and genetic progress achieved in a population or animal production unit. The amount, characteristics and demographics of the data on file at the USDA-AIPL database and DHI programs were determined for the latest year of 2011 and then the last five years 2007-2011. For 2011 there were over 4.4 million cows enrolled in the milk recording programs that submitted data to AIPL as part of the routine programs. It is estimated that another 1.2 million animals were enrolled in milk recording plans that were for management only with data returned directly from the local or regional milk recording field service organization to the dairy farm. In 2011, the 4.4 million cows submitted to the AIPL database provided over 46 million test days with an average of 52 data variables each test day for research, genetic evaluations and management purposes. These data provided animal genetic evaluations (female and male) and key benchmarks for both management and genetic use by the US dairy industry. The trends for genetic progress and time sensitive traits such as somatic cell counts and Productive Life index demonstrate the progress and direction that can be achieved with economic or social signals that are presented to the US dairy production system.