



Fresh Cow Index

What's the Best Way to Evaluate a Fresh Cow's Profit Potential?

The two most important animal groups on a dairy farm that determine a herd's longevity are young calves and transition cows. They are also the most vulnerable when it comes to decision-making, since each choice carries with it the weight of their next lactation or the rest of their life. Determining the profit potential of an animal, especially as she enters the milking string, requires careful consideration to be certain she can cover the price of her upbringing and current cost of production. As farm-gate margins tighten, the dividing line will rise for whether she stays or leaves, and relying on just input vs output could leave an inferior cow on the wrong side of the trailer door.

Producers need simple, data-driven parameters they can trust to help determine the success of their transition cow and early lactation programs. Key performance indicators such as dry cow cure rate, peak lactation milk, involuntary culling incidence, and 305-day energy-corrected milk can provide valuable insight into individual cow health. Analyzing the gap between predicted and actual performance, as well as month-over-month changes can allow farm managers to make quicker determinations with greater confidence for removing under-performing animals before milk or reproduction problems reduce herd success.

The Fresh Cow Index® (FCI®), a new metric featured in FreshFocus transition cow reports within DairyDepot® in HerdHQ®, can help evaluate cows for their early lactation performance, especially when grouped by calving month, to identify areas of opportunity among individual animals, seasons, or procedures that affect the operation as a whole. FCI uses milk



recording data and relies on either the genetic evaluation of the animal itself, or parent average if only dam and sire have a genetic evaluation, to create this impactful marker. FCI is calculated for first and older lactation cows between 5–40 days in milk.

Whether she's entering her first or fourth lactation, those first two months in milk are critical for evaluating her profitability, but each metric alone can only provide so much information. Fresh Cow Index takes the guess work out of tough decisions. Developed in collaboration with researchers from the University of Florida, FCI combines 25 individual animal variables into a single figure that translates into actionable results. From herd-level FreshFocus reports, producers and consultants can also drill down into CowCompass® for individual cow information — turning one clear number into more informed, cow-level decisions.



HerdHQ: Backed by Data. Built for Action.

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