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Repro Money: A Farmer-Directed Team-Based Extension Program to Improve Reproductive Performance in Wisconsin Dairy Herds

Poor reproduction in dairy cattle is a multifactorial problem and includes aspects of physiology, genetics, management, health, and nutrition. Thus, optimizing reproductive performance requires an integrated approach among farm personnel and farm consultants that deal with reproduction. Our objective is to improve the reproductive efficiency of the dairy enterprise through implementation of farmer-directed team-based program called Repro Money. Each farmer that enrolls in the Repro Money program agrees to conduct four meetings during a six to eight month period. Before the first meeting, the farm owner selects team members and the team leader from farm personnel and consultants that deal with reproduction on that farm (e.g., herd veterinarian, nutritionist, AI technician, county extension agent, herd manager). At the first meeting, the team leader uses a data gathering and survey tool we developed to guide the team through situation analysis to identify farm-specific critical control points for successful reproductive management. Based on the results from this tool, the team sets goals, defines action points, assigns responsibilities, and determines appropriate evaluation strategies for individual team members. Meetings two and three are structured to ensure that team goals identified at the first meeting are on track. During the fourth and final meeting, the team reassesses the reproductive performance of the dairy using the same tool as the first meeting thereby documenting change. We are now in the process of enrolling farms into the Repro Money program. One of the early adopters of Repro Money increased their 21-d pregnancy rate from 18 to 24% resulting in an estimated \$39,000 per year profit increase after implementing management changes identified during the program. With this farmer-directed team-based approach, dairy farmers can get the best experience and latest technology from their advisers directly to the farm in a coordinated way.
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