



# Industry Standards: Why?

Canada is world renowned for having outstanding dairy cattle with superior genetic potential. In 2014, the exports of dairy genetics from Canada exceeded \$158M, which was nearly a 30% increase over 2013 and a 43% increase over 2012. The world has confidence in Canadian genetics and the high quality of our animals in terms of production, conformation, longevity and other functional traits. An important part of the confidence stems from the high level of integrity associated with the information published for all dairy animals in Canada.

## **DHI Options**

For over 15 years now, Canadian producers have a wide spectrum of service levels made available to them when enrolled on milk recording. The ultimate goal of DHI services provided by CanWest DHI and Valacta is to provide valuable information for management decisions to maximize cow and herd profitability. The definition of “valuable” can vary from producer to producer and, therefore, so might the type of services they receive from their milk recording agency. Producers may decide if they want monthly herd visits to achieve 12 tests per year or decrease the frequency to 10, 8 or even 6 times per year. At each visit, they can decide if they want to conduct a 24-hour test based on all milkings that day, or if they only want to take milk weights and samples for one milking, from which a 24-hour yield is estimated using national procedures applied consistently across the country. Over and above all these options, producers can also decide if they want to involve milk recording staff on test day to conduct supervised testing instead of the herd owner recording each cow’s milk production on test day and collecting milk samples for sending to the DHI laboratory for component and somatic cell count analyses.

## **Publishable Lactations**

Depending on the milk recording services a herd receives, the lactations for each cow may be officially published by Canadian Dairy Network (CDN) for the world to see or they may only be reported back to the producer for management purposes only. Not every producer sees the value in having “publishable” lactations and they are therefore not prepared to pay for the higher level of milk recording services required to meet the standards for official publishability.

In Canada, there are approximately 960,000 dairy cows spread across 12,000 herds, which equates to an average of 80 cows per herd. Of these, 700,000 (73%) cows in 9,000 (75%) herds are voluntarily enrolled on some level of milk recording service. Based on the choices made by herd owners, 54% of the herds enrolled on DHI have decided to meet the national standards required for the official publication of lactations. These herds represent nearly 60% of the cows on milk recording. Publishable lactations are made publicly available on the CDN web site and distributed to the breed associations for public access on web sites, official pedigrees, sale catalogues, etc. Publishable lactations are the basis for calculating official herd average production levels as well as for inclusion in the calculation of various awards including Master Breeder, Star Brood Cow points, Superior Production, Lifetime Production Certificates and other recognitions at the cow and herd levels. In general, herds enrolled on DHI service levels that meet the requirements for publishable lactations will also end up with official genetic evaluations for production traits published by CDN. Classified cows with official production indexes will also receive official type indexes as well as an official LPI and, starting in August 2015, they will also receive an official Pro\$ value, which is the new genetic selection index for the Holstein and Jersey breeds in Canada.

## **Official Publication Requires National Standards**

Herd owners that opt to enroll on DHI at services levels that result in officially published lactations and genetic evaluations can benefit significantly from the world exposure this brings to their cows, herd and breeder's prefix. The integrity of the data published is dependent upon the way that Canada ensures the national standards are met by all herd owners involved with supervised testing. These standards are established by an industry committee under the leadership of CDN and administered at the field level by DHI. On behalf of the dairy cattle improvement industry, CanWest DHI and Valacta use various indicators to monitor milk recording data collected from herds involved with supervised testing and/or qualifying for genetic evaluations. Part of this data analysis involves identifying herds that have individual cows performing at very high levels and/or have very high herd average production levels. Checks are also done comparing milk weights recorded on test day to the amount of milk shipped from the bulk tank. Any combination of these data indicators may trigger a mandatory retest of a herd, without prior notice, immediately following a regularly scheduled test day. On occasion, any herd may also be selected for conducting such a retest, simply to ensure the overall integrity of Canada's system for publishing official lactations.

All herd owners enrolled on milk recording services that involve supervised testing and/or qualify for inclusion in genetic evaluations, are subject to the terms, conditions and obligations of the Canadian service standards manual. Herein, it is clearly written, among other things, that herd owners must:

- Uniquely and accurately identify each cow in the herd,
- Test all milking cows in the herd on each test day,
- Maintain the same schedule of milking and animal milking order on test day as on other days,
- Maintain the same herd management practices on test day as on other days,
- Assure the accuracy and completeness of all information collected and recorded,
- Not engage in any activity that may mislead, impair or attempt to impair the reliability of any information about an animal or the herd,
- Use approved milk-metering devices and corresponding sampling devices, and
- Accept any retest, without prior notice, at the time and date determined by the milk recording agency.

In the event that any of the above obligations are not fully respected by the herd owner, appropriate disciplinary actions have been established by CDN for application by the milk recording agencies in a consistent manner across the country. CDN also has procedures in place for herd owners to subsequently appeal any imposed disciplinary sanction, which would then be reviewed by a group of independent producers also enrolled on DHI services with publishable lactations.

## **Freedom of Choice**

For the most part, Canadian producers fully understand and respect the industry standards currently in place relative to the official publication of lactation records. For herd owners wishing to use lactation records only for internal herd management decisions, the same standards do not apply. It is a choice of each producer to decide if they want to receive publishable lactation records and official genetic evaluations for their cows. When electing to do so, however, they also become part of the national system for data verification to ensure the integrity of all lactations that become publicly accessible to the world. These lactations also form the basis of the major awards given to Canadian producers and breeders for the outstanding performance and genetic potential of their cattle and herds.

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