National Dairy Herd Improvement Association Coordinating Group Report

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The first meeting of the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) Coordinating Group was held in Washington, D.C., February 23-24, 1966. All thirteen representatives were in attendance.

Objectives. The broad objectives of the Coordinating Group are to bring about more complete and effective integration of the operational and administrative aspects of the National Cooperative Dairy Herd Improvement Program at the National, Regional, State, and County levels. It provides direct representation from the segments of the dairy industry that depend heavily upon the use of the data produced. It provides a stronger base for the formulation of policy, rules, and regulations and for administering their effective coordination and application to the DHIA Program.

Strengthening DHIA. Much of the first meeting was devoted to the question of how can the Coordinating Group best act to assist in strengthening DHIA. These deliberations included discussions of such matters as: (1) defining the functions of the Coordinating Group; (2) outlining its operating procedure; (3) defining the relationship of the Coordinating Group to other interested organizations; and (4) re-evaluating the existing Memorandum of Understanding which outlines the individual responsibilities of the Federal Extension Service, the Agricultural Research Service, and the State Extension Services, including County Agricultural Agents, and local associations. The existence of 18 active State DHIA associations, in addition to the recently formed National DHIA, Inc., and the desirability of having these strong organizations were noted. Some of these organizations are or can effectively serve in promoting, bringing about uniformity in rule enforcement, and in the conduct of business oriented service activities.

Needs. The critical need for a coordinated effort through which sound research results can be made available on the adequacies of existing and new weighing and sampling devices was discussed. The Coordinating Group agreed to establish a technical sub-group to be composed of research and dairy extension personnel who would develop interest and obtain research results in this important area. The technical sub-group will report their findings and make recommendations to the Coordinating Group for their evaluation.

Uniformity of rules. In recognizing the ultimate need for greater uniformity in the use and enforcement of DHIA rules, the Coordinating Group requested that the Dairy Records Committee of the American Dairy Science Association thoroughly review the existing DHIA rules, realizing the need for standards that are practical, realistic, and enforceable under modern production systems, and yet rules that will provide the authentic and accurate production records and services needed. This Committee will report their findings and recommendations to the Coordinating Group.

Agency responsibilities. Steps were taken which should lead to the re-defining of the responsibilities of cooperating agencies and groups who are involved in the overall conduct of dairy recordkeeping programs. The chairman of each of the four regional extension sub-groups was asked to work with their respective extension dairymen, extension directors, and state and local associations, in order to determine what is expected of local and state organizations in the conduct of DHIA recordkeeping. Attention will be given to the roles involved in promotion, rule enforcement, business activity, personnel management, educational activities and other related areas of work. The recommendations by the four regional sub-group chairmen, each of whom are members of the Coordinating Group, will be reported to the Coordinating Group at a future meeting.

The responsibility and authority that the Coordinating Group may assume was outlined and discussed largely in terms of coordinating, evaluating, leadership, and influence. It was felt that the influence of the Coordinating Group could be effectively used to bring about improvements in such troublesome areas as rule enforcement at local levels without the necessity of direct enforcement action by individual extension specialists. It was the hope of the Group that this could be effectively done through the broad industry support and representation in the Coordinating Group, and through its efforts in systematically and thoroughly evaluating such problem areas as rule establishment and enforcement, and weighing and sampling devices. The Coordinating Group will call upon competent individuals and technical sub-groups in its continuing efforts.

Records program. In its first meeting, the Coordinating Group recognized that DHIA is and has been a strong and effective recordkeeping program. This is supported by the fact that (1) participation in DHIA has doubled since 1954 and currently approaches three million cows; (2) almost 19% of all milking cows are enrolled in the three plans of record-
keeping; (3) cows on standard DHIA exceed all dairy cows in milk yield by more than 4,200 pounds per cow annually; (4) the number of records made available for research and sire evaluation has tripled since 1954 and numbered 1.75 million in 1965; (5) approximately 38% of all cows enrolled on standard DHIA are registered in breed society herd books; (6) the sire evaluation work done by USDA has been placed on a systematic, complete, and up-to-date basis and provides the industry with the basic tools necessary for genetic progress in production traits; (7) the cow evaluation program initiated by USDA in 1964 should lead to a more rapid rate of genetic gain; and (8) the National DHIA farmers organization was first formed in 1965.

Attendants and future meetings. The next meeting for the National DHIA Coordinating Group was set for May 16-17, 1966, in Washington, D.C.

Those members in attendance at the meeting were: L. H. Davis (Chairman) Director, Federal Extension Service, USDA; E. L. Corley (Secretary) Chief, Dairy Cattle Research Branch, ARS, USDA; F. H. Baker, Coordinator, Animal Science Program, FES, USDA; John Barnard, Dairy Extension Specialist, Utah State University; Craig Beane, President, National DHIA, Inc.; Charles E. Bell, Director, Division of Agricultural Service and Technology, FES (Assisted L. H. Davis); H. C. Gilmore, Dairy Extension Specialist, Pennsylvania State University; G. W. Harpestad, Dairy Extension Specialist, University of Illinois; H. A. Herman, Exec. Secretary, National Association of Animal Breeders; R. E. Hodgson, Director, Animal Husbandry Research Division, ARS, USDA; S. W. Hoitt, Director, Extension Service, University of New Hampshire; D. N. Putnam, Dairy Extension Specialist, Pennsylvania State University; R. H. Rumler, Exec. Secretary, Holstein-Friesian Association; M. E. Senger, Dairy Extension Specialist, North Carolina State University.