

# Dollar Drain

## Dollar Saving Tips for Texas Dairies

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### **Benchmarking**

With the approach of the New Year, it brings reflection on the past and the preparation for the future. Benchmarking is a technique used for assessment of current situations and establishment of future goals. With this technique, you:

- 1) establish where you are for some trait,
- 2) identify an action that causes the trait to change,
- 3) implement that action, and
- 4) monitor that trait across time.

You do not need a computer to do this, but it helps.

For example, suppose you want to track somatic cell counts in your herd. First, collect somatic cell information from your check stubs or from your milk handler. (Some laboratories have this information available on their websites.) Draw a graph of daily bulk tank somatic cell values for the past two years. Then stack one year on top of another year on the same graph. Do you see a trend? Did the cell counts jump in the summer for both years? Did they spike in January when we usually get a lot of rain? If you make a management change, did the shape of your graph differ from the previous year? Did your management change work? This type of tracking is called benchmarking.

To determine if other herds are having the same problems as your herd, take benchmarking one step further and compare your herd with similar herds. DHI members can access [DairyMetrics \(http://www.drms.org\)](http://www.drms.org) for help. Select herds similar to your own and compare. In addition, groups of producers can get together and share the information. This provides a method to identify potentially changeable production parameters. Knowing which area to "attack" helps you stop the Dollar Drain.

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