



Fresh Cow Performance, Real ROI

Turn early lactation performance signals into clearer decisions and stronger production

HerdHQ turns your test-day and DartSync data into fast, visual insights — helping you uncover transition bottlenecks, compare to peers, and act where it counts. Fresh cow performance in the first 5–40 days in milk sets the trajectory for the entire lactation, and small shifts in first-test performance can impact profitability and early culling risk. This how-to guide shows how HerdHQ can be used to evaluate Fresh Cow Index (FCI) trends, using results observed in one herd — including a \$176 per cow gain and 22 pounds more milk at first test — as an example outcome to illustrate how improved early-lactation performance may translate into ROI.

ROI Highlight

\$176 per cow gain in first 40 days of lactation

HerdHQ® is used to establish benchmark comparisons and build a dashboard to evaluate transition programs, showing an average of 22 pounds more milk than expected when using FCI, based on results observed in one herd.

How to View this in HerdHQ

Use **MilkMetrics®** and **DairyDepot®** to pinpoint improvement areas and monitor progress over time.

- **Benchmark Performance**

- ◊ Use MilkMetrics to compare management factors with peer herds
 - » Evaluate Rolling Herd Average milk, fat and protein
 - » Establish alerts for cows 1–40 DIM for all lactations when production drops by 3 lbs. or more from the prior test to identify potential transition issues early

New Alert

Herdcode: 99999999

Tab: Production

Row: Milk 1-40 DIM All

Column: Diff

Condition: less than

Min: -3

Max:

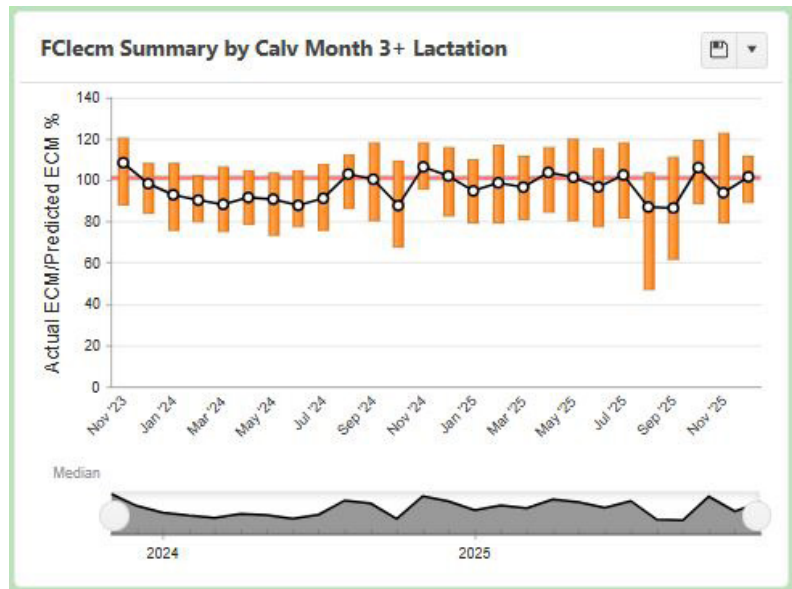
Background Color: [Red]

Save Alert Discard Changes

General	Turnover	Production	Udder Health	Reproduction	Transition	Genetics	Heifers
Peak Milk 3> Lact	Curr Test	Prev Test	Diff	Last Year	Year Diff		
Milk 1-40 DIM All	98	99	-1	97	1		
Milk 1-40 DIM 1st Lact	81	73	8	79	2		
Milk 1-40 DIM 2nd Lact	101	110	-9	100	1		
Milk 1-40 DIM 3> Lact	106	117	-11	106	0		
FCI Ratio 1-40 DIM All	1.1	1.2	-0.1	1.1	0		

- **Monitor Fresh Cow Performance**

- ◊ Use the Transition widget in DairyDepot and focus on FCI
 - » Evaluate FCI by lactation group, which compares first test-day Energy Corrected Milk (ECM) production to predicted performance
 - » Review trends over time; values below 100 indicate underperformance
 - » Graphs are grouped by calving month to help identify seasonal or management-related patterns
- ◊ The FCI Summary by calving month can also be viewed as a table with additional detail
 - » Avg FCI Diff ECM shows how much additional milk per cow was produced than expected for that lactation group
 - » Negative values indicate underperformance relative to expectations
 - » Factors that may influence first test production and the FCI include twins, abortions, calving difficulty, abnormal gestation lengths, somatic cell count, abnormal dry period lengths, SCC infections and fat and protein ratios



FCIecm Summary by Calv Month 1st Lactation

Export to Excel

Month	Calved	Twins	Aborted	Pct Diff Calv	Avg Age	Avg Gest	Pct Short Gest	Pct Long Gest	Cows FCI ECM	Avg FCI ECM	Avg FCI Diff ECM	Cows w/ SCC	LSSCC	Pct Infected	Pct High FPR	Pct Invert
Nov 2025	53	0	0	0	24	276	17.2	10.3	21	113.1	10.7	50	2.4	20	41.7	8.3
Oct 2025	03	0	0	1.9	24.1	270	0.2	23	42	97.7	-3	66	2.2	18.2	54.5	9.1
Sep 2025	137	1	0	2.2	24.5	276	24.4	15.6	23	76.3	-19.9	112	2.5	19.6	53.6	8
Aug 2025	98	1	0	5	24.1	274	27.7	10.6	33	84.9	-12.3	85	2.2	14.1	48.2	8.2
Jul 2025	88	1	0	6.4	24.3	274	29.2	12.5	35	98.2	-1.3	79	2.5	24.1	46.8	12.7
Jun 2025	47	0	0	2.5	24.9	274	40	7.5	16	98	-1.4	39	2.8	23.1	57.6	9.1

1 - 20 of 26 items

- **Review Longer-Term FCI Trends**

- ◊ Use the FCI Annual Report to evaluate performance over the past year
 - » Review average ECM Gain/Cow/Day
 - » This gain or loss can also be projected across the first 40 days of lactation
 - » Cows with FCI values below 100 are more likely to have lower projected 305-day records and a higher likelihood of leaving the herd during the lactation

FreshFocus FCIecm Annual Report

Export to Excel

Fields	Lact1	Lact2	Lact3
Num Calved	906	542	1093
Num FCI	382	387	786
Pct w/ FCI	42.2	71.4	71.9
Predicted ECM	87.4	115.8	118.9
FCI	95.3	101.1	96.6
ECM Gain/Cow/Day	4.6	6.7	10.3
ECM Gain/Day	999	1220	4076
FCI < 80	25.4	16	25.1
FCI 80-99	31.2	31	25.4
FCI 100-119	28.3	32.8	29.6
FCI >= 120	15.2	20.2	19.8
P305 ECM	26479	30654	30488
FCI < 100 P305ECM	25727	30637	29545
FCI >= 100 P305ECM	28934	33559	33342
Num FCI < 100	216	182	397
Pct Left FCI < 100	6.5	8.8	21.2
Pct Left FCI >= 100	2.4	7.8	11.1

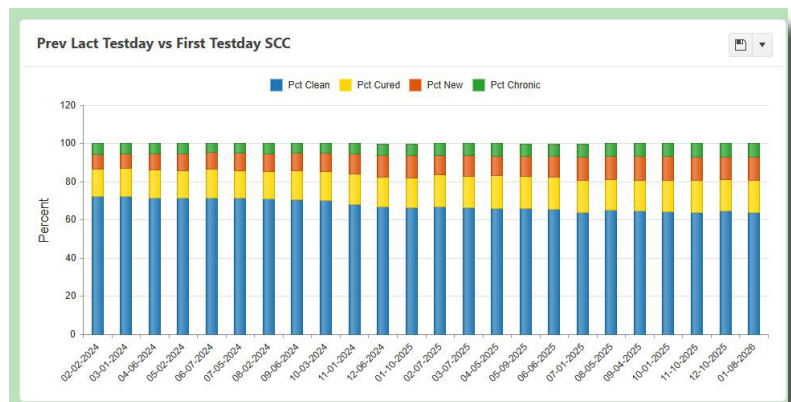
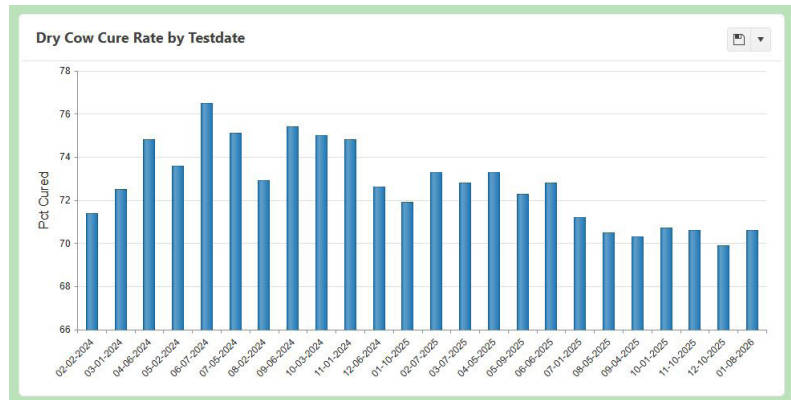
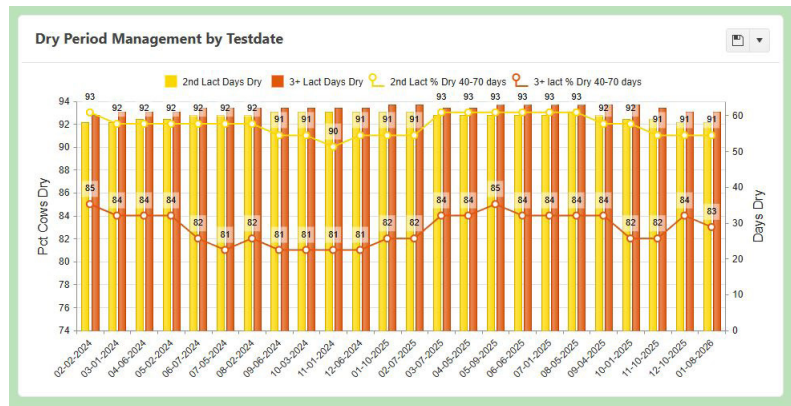
1 - 17 of 17 items

- **Evaluate Other FreshFocus Areas**

- ◊ Use the Transition and Udder Health widgets in DairyDepot to review additional transition-related factors that may impact FCI

- » Dry Period Management: Evaluate whether most dry periods are between 40-70 days. Identify abnormal dry periods that may affect first-test performance

- » Dry Cow Treatment Effectiveness: Use Dry Cow Cure Rate graph and Previous Lactation Testday vs First Testday SCC graphs to assess whether dry cow management or dry-off protocols may be contributing to performance issues. Use these same views to monitor changes over time

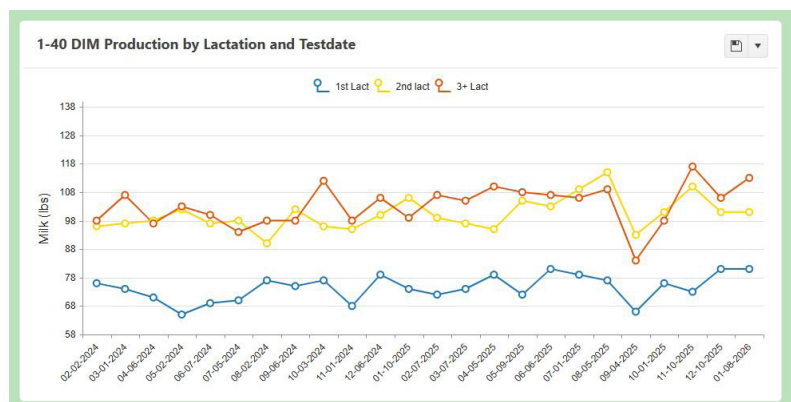


- **Review Early Lactation Production in the Production widget**

- ◊ Because first-test production is used in FCI calculations, reviewing early lactation performance provides important context

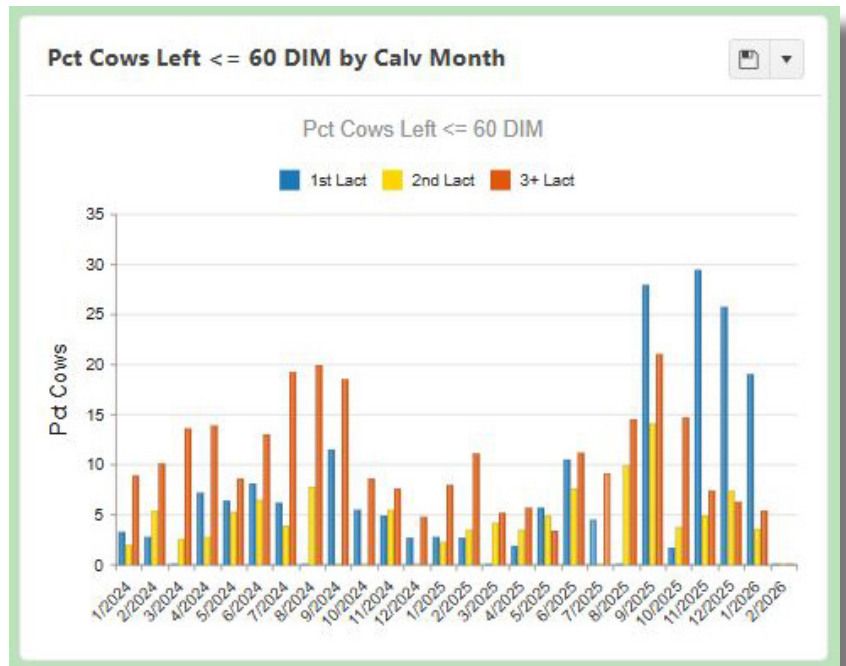
- » Evaluate production for cows 1-40 days in milk by lactation group and test date to help explain shifts in FCI values

- » This view can clarify why FCI values may rise or fall during specific periods



- Review cows that leave the herd within the first 60 days in milk in the Transition widget
 - ◊ The FCI Annual Summary often shows higher culling rates among cows with FCI values below 100 compared to those above 100
 - ◊ Both removals and deaths can be reviewed by lactation group to identify patterns

Using FCI helps determine whether cows are producing up to their expected potential. Reviewing FCI alongside other FreshFocus areas supports deeper evaluation of performance gaps and highlights areas where management practices are working well.



Cows Left/Died <= 60 DIM by Calv Month 3+ Lactation

Export to Excel

Month	Calved	Left	Pct Left	Died	Pct Died
Nov 2025	87	8	9.2	7	8
Oct 2025	137	24	17.5	11	8
Sep 2025	70	19	27.1	16	22.9
Aug 2025	84	16	19	7	8.3
Jul 2025	108	12	11.1	2	1.9
Jun 2025	87	12	13.8	0	0
May 2025	72	3	4.2	3	4.2

1 - 20 of 26 items

Assumptions

- 22 lbs. more milk at first test compared to expected production
- Milk price estimate = \$20/cwt.
- Revenue gain per cow in first 40 days of lactation = \$176 = $(22 \div 100 \text{ lbs.} \times \$20) \times 40 \text{ days}$
- For a 1,000-cow herd = \$176,000 annual revenue gain



HerdHQ: Backed by Data. Built for Action.

See what's happening in your herd with HerdHQ
www.drms.org/HerdHQ/What-Is-HerdHQ

