**Herd Testing**

Herd tests play a vital role in in improving the quality of the national herd. data from herd test is used to identify productive animals that can be selectively bred to provide genetic gains for the dairy sector

Herd testing is used to identify superior cows, which produce superior heifer calves.

Herd testing involves sampling and analysing milk from each cow in the herd from two consecutive milkings. Together with herd recording, where each cow’s genetic and production details hare taken, herd testing provides an important basis for breeding selection.

Other uses of herd test results are to: -



* identify poor producing cows, which should be culled.
* provide a checking system on the quality of the bulls being used.
* provide information on which to base herd management decisions e.g. drying off date.
* identify cows with mastitis that need treatment, drying off or culling.
* provide a check on milking efficiency and milking machine performance.

Regular herd testing increases the market value of the herd, by providing more reliable BW and PW figures. Buyers are like to pay more for animals with a proven history of both PW and BW.

**Types of herd tests**

There are two types of herd tests – classic or single.

* A classic test involves taking samples from an afternoon milking followed by a morning milking.
* For a single test, samples are taken either from a morning or an afternoon milking.

LIC recommend having at least four herd tests a season to provide comprehensive information for on-farm decision making, whether you choose a classic or a single test.

The samples are delivered to our laboratories in Christchurch or Hamilton and tested for:

* volume
* milkfat
* protein
* lactose
* somatic cell count.

Results are display in MINDA within 4 so farmers are able to run or create reports using the most up to date information.

Farmers contact LIC to book a herd test

***Exercise***

1. *Explain how herd testing is carried out?*
2. *Explain why you would recommend a dairy farmer carryout herd testing regularly throughout the season.*
3. *Explain how a dairy farmer would use herd test results and how would this affect farm production.*