



A Century of Dairy Excellence

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In June 2025, the *Milk Producer* magazine celebrated 100 years, alongside Dairy Farmers of Ontario's 60th anniversary—together marking a legacy of quality, innovation, and commitment to Ontario's dairy industry.

Milk recording, also known as dairy herd improvement (DHI) testing, has played a critical role in advancing dairy farming by improving milk production, milk quality, herd health, and genetic progress. The practice has evolved over more than a century by adapting to technological advancements and industry needs to maximize its value to dairy producers.

Canada's milk recording history stands out for its early coordination, strong public-private partnerships, high data standards, and global leadership in dairy genetics. The integration of data and innovation continues to drive the success of Canada's dairy sector.

100 Years of Milk Recording in Ontario

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► Late 1800s

The first organized milk recording programs began in Denmark and Sweden, followed by other European countries. The primary goal was to identify high-producing cows and improve herd efficiency.

► 1904

The first official milk recording program began in Canada led by the federal government. Each month supervised tests were recorded as 'official publications' for production, awards, breed improvement and pedigrees.

► 1950s

Provincial ministries of agriculture and federal agencies like Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada were involved in developing and funding milk recording systems.

Government technicians played a key role in on-farm milk testing and laboratory methods evolved to provide consistency and comparability of data across provinces.

Milk recording sets the foundation for dairy genetics with the inception of recorded milk weights and on-farm butterfat testing.

► Early 1980s

Collaboration grew between milk recording services, breed associations and AI centers. The Ontario Milk Marketing Board took a leadership role in the privatization of milk recording, leading to the formation of the Ontario Dairy Herd Improvement Corporation from the provincial government (1981).

Centralized labs begin milk analysis, with value-added protein testing and SCC screening (1983), giving Ontario producers better management tools and herd insights.

► Mid 1990s

Dairy cattle genetic evaluations, originally part of the federal government, were privatized to form the Canadian Dairy Network (CDN), an industry run organization (1995). Milk recording data (management and published) from Canada feeds into world-class genetic evaluation programs.

Introduced the first herd management score* in Ontario (1996). (*Herd Performance Index)

► Late 1990s

Launched Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) testing in Canada - a global first (1998).

Centralized all dairy record processing across Canada into a single database and system, still used today.

The first robot herd DHI test in North America was conducted in Ontario (1999).

► Early 2000s

Evolution of services with electronic milk meters, on-farm software, herdbook registration, and herd management reporting. Sensors and devices track milk production and cow health, integrating data for better herd management.

► 2019

CanWest DHI, Valacta and Canadian Dairy Network (CDN) form Lactanet Canada - a unified national body focusing on dairy data, genetics, and management services.

► 2020

Lactanet Genetics (formerly CDN) commemorates 25 years of genetic services. Genomic testing revolutionizes dairy breeding, providing DNA-based evaluations for production, reproduction, longevity, health, conformation and other traits.

Introduced electronic DHI as a fully remote milk recording electronic service that supports many advantages of milk recording without physical sampling.

Established the International Dairy Data Exchange Network (IDDEN) in collaboration with six international organizations to standardize and continue to integrate data from automated milking systems.

Celebrated the first virtual announcement of Canada's Best Managed Herds.



Canadian milk recording programs have long emphasized data accuracy, traceability, and integrity, earning global trust. They have evolved from manual record-keeping to sophisticated data-driven herd management. These high standards have allowed Canadian dairy genetics and data to be influential in international benchmarking and breeding programs. With continued advancements in genetics, automation, and digital technologies, milk recording remains a cornerstone of efficient and sustainable dairy farming in Ontario and also worldwide.

► 2025

Ontario celebrates 100 years of milk recording excellence and Canada remains a leader in innovation, genetic progress, and data-driven dairy farming.

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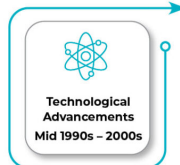
**The Beginning
1800s - 1900s**



**Standards &
Science
1950s - 1970s**



**Collaboration &
Genetic Progress
1980s - Early 1990s**



**Technological
Advancements
Mid 1990s - 2000s**



**Modern Day
Impact
2019 - Present**

► 1911

The passing of The Milk Test Act by the federal government supported regulatory compliance for milk quality while adopting the Babcock test to determine milk fat content.

► 1925

Ontario begins organized milk recording, led by the Ontario Department of Agriculture and agricultural colleges.

► 1930s - 1940s

Dairy herd improvement associations (DHIA) were formed to oversee and standardize milk recording programs and provide benchmarking for farmers.

Artificial Insemination programs were introduced and are the main benefactor driving milk recording.

► 1960s

Together, 10 provincial organizations and the federal Records of Performance (ROP) program provide milk recording and herd management services.

The introduction of computerized record-keeping made it easier to track milk and fat yields and support the groundwork for genetic evaluations.

► 1970s

Milk recording and type classification were an integral part of the rise of young sire proving programs allowing producers to select cows and bulls with superior milk production traits.

AI organizations incentivized farmers to participate, recognizing the importance of broad-based accurate data.

► 1985

The federal ROP activities in the province were transferred to Ontario DHI.

► **Late 1980s**
DHI and ROP programs are privatized across the country following Ontario's lead.

The hiring of more women in field positions contributed to the change in traditional attitudes in conservative farm communities.

► Early 1990s

The introduction of Multiple Component pricing drives milk protein testing and computers are introduced in the field for test day data collection (1993).

An Industry Standards committee sets the standards for Publication and records used for genetic evaluations (1994).

► 2004

Established CanWest DHI as an alliance between Western Canadian DHI Services and Ontario DHI to unify efforts and create a more integrated approach to dairy herd improvement across multiple provinces.

► Mid 2000s

Valacta was created as a Quebec Center of Expertise through the Quebec Dairy Herd Analysis Service (PRL/DHAS) (2006). Atlantic Dairy Livestock Improvement Corp. (ADLIC) merged with Valacta (2008).

Introduced genomic evaluations (2008).

► Late 2000s

Expanded milk testing services for John's, Leukosis/BVD, Mastitis, pregnancy (GestLab), and ketosis/BHB (KetoLab).

► 2021

Launched Lactanetresolutions.ca, an online portal for all licensed dairy farmers to participate in shaping policy, best practices, programs, and services related to milk recording, genetics and the dairy industry.

► 2022-2023

Released the Herd Sustainability Index, as well as genetic evaluations for Methane Efficiency and Body Maintenance Requirements, in response to milk recording becoming an essential part of sustainable dairy farming.

► 2024

Publication lactation standards evolve to include component production data from automated on-farm sensors.

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