



## **Leadership Report**

For decades now we have been talking about the biggest challenge to providing DHIA services is not software or milk analyses or data flow. It is finding someone reliable and dedicated enough to work those hours that may start at 3:30 a.m. on a dairy that may be 90 minutes or more from home. Add in the winter roads (think last year here) and our large deer population as additional challenges. Our folks now need larger vehicles that may not get the best gas mileage, in order to carry the equipment needed on larger dairies, and vehicles have become more expensive and more difficult to find.

We are fortunate that these challenges are often offset by the opportunity to do work that is worthwhile and rewarding. We asked Field Techs at fall conferences what might their job easier or more rewarding. One of the answers came back “I hope the customers respect my time”. Another answer was “I hope the customer appreciates my efforts”. Our customers do great work and are usually a pleasure to visit once a month. I believe we can say the same for our field techs.

One of the ways we can show mutual respect is to accommodate sample days that are set so farmers get data refreshed in a routine manner, and field techs don't have to redo their schedules many times each month.

Safety is a growing challenge. As field techs age and days get longer and work speed increases, so does the danger of an injury. We have been blessed over the years to have healthy people and low worker's compensation claims. 2023 brought us changes there as we had 9 field techs out on workers' compensation claims including slipping on parlor steps and ladders, being knocked over by aggressive cows, and an unusually high number of car accidents, most of which were with deer. We appreciate the efforts many of you make to help the field tech on sample day. Help from dairies makes for a smoother sample day and more accurate data. It also enables us to keep good field techs around longer, and that is very important.

Another issue for the future is dairy producer leadership. Every organization has this challenge. As farms get larger and busier, time away from home is at a premium. We thank those of you who show up to zoom and live meetings, and we encourage others of you to get involved if you have interest. The best ideas come from those working with the cows and the data.

*Bruce Dokkebakken*