

# Heat Detection Must Be a High Priority



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Inefficient heat detection is still the number one nemesis of efficient dairy herd reproductive performance and the successful use of artificial insemination. If we use a voluntary waiting period of 60 days, a 40% conception rate, and breed cows for up to 300 days in milk, the following table shows the average days open for a range of heat detection efficiencies.

Heat Detection %   Days Open

20	211
40	163
60	133
80	114

The bottom line is low heat detection efficiency can single handedly compromise the reproductive performance of a dairy herd. The response to this situation in too many Kentucky dairy herds is to turn in the bull. The view from my seat in the “Ivory Tower” shows that this adds insult to injury, but is considered necessary to avoid financial disaster. Better options would be to utilize activity monitors or an intensive tail chalking program to aid in heat detection and/or an ovulation synchronization protocol so cows can be inseminated at a predetermined time.

We need to maximize the percentage of cows and heifers bred to superior AI sires. Of course, there is no free lunch. The successful use of AI requires each farm to find the combination of time commitment, management skill, technology, and synchronization protocols which result in cows being inseminated in a timely manner.