

# Alertys pregnancy tests: A case study from McCarty Family Farms

## Better for cows and employees

“We went into sample-based testing to not rely on just 1 or 2 people to ultrasound. Anybody can pull a blood sample, and it’s even easier to pull a milk sample. It’s less stressful for the cow and less of a safety risk for both the cow and the employee.”



Mike McCarty, Rexford, Kansas

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- Overview:**
- 4 locations, 130 employees
  - 8,100 cows milked every day
  - 65,000 gallons of milk collected daily
  - Switched to sample-based pregnancy testing in 2015
- Situation:**
- Limited personnel trained to ultrasound due to time and cost
  - Routine employee turnover required ongoing training
- Goals:**
- Reduce time/money spent training
  - Less lock-up time and handling of cows
  - Make testing easy for any employee to do
- Solution:**
- Sample-based testing with Alertys™ pregnancy tests

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### Reducing training time and costs

McCarty Family Farms used to spend dedicated time and money to train a few employees on ultrasound. They had spent more than \$10,000 on ultrasound equipment, and the cost for the training can be as high as \$1,295 per employee. With the the expected turnover of hourly staff, training costs had become a recurring expense. With Alertys pregnancy tests, training is free and easy. It only takes 5 minutes to show parlor workers how to match up the cow’s ID with the collection tube label and pull a strip sample. Now McCarty dairies don’t have to rely on the skills of just a few employees. Virtually any employee can take a milk sample, and the cow is already in the parlor.

### Less stress for cows, greater safety for employees

McCarty Family Farms are always looking for ways to reduce animal handling and keep their employees safe. They transitioned from ultrasound to sample-based testing in 2015. The tests detect pregnancy-associated glycoproteins (PAGs), which are only produced in the presence of a placenta. “Our animal welfare program definitely plays a factor,” Mike McCarty explains. “Anything to reduce stress on cows. Our mentality has shifted over the last 8 years as we’ve partnered with Dannon and earned certification from Validus, an independent audit firm with strict requirements about the care of dairy animals and dairy workers.” Public perceptions matter, too. As a large dairy with lots of visitors, they realized that people don’t like watching cows locked up at the rails and under stress from manual pregnancy checks. Mike says, “The more we can leave that cow alone, the better.” Now they test milk or blood samples to confirm pregnancy as early as 28 days after a cow has been bred.

### Easily integrating testing into the daily routine

Using Alertys pregnancy tests eliminates the time their girls are locked up at the rails waiting for rectal ultrasound. They can eat and go back to resting when they want. At McCarty Family Farms, they run about 368 tests every week using milk samples. When the animals come into the parlor, they can draw samples without interrupting milk production, stressing the cows, or endangering their employees. Results are available the next day, and action can be taken in the barn based on results. Using sexed semen, sourced heifers, balanced rations, and sample-based pregnancy testing provides Mike with everything he needs in his reproductive management program.

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