



VETS ON ALABAMA DAIRY NEWS

July 2013

As cows enter into the transitional period, it is a critical time and has a marked effect on the herd's production and overall performance. Transitional management should not be looked at as an additional cost. If done well you will reap the rewards down the track.

With many cows in their last month of pregnancy, monitoring of cow condition is important as we approach calving. Unfortunately if cows are light now, it is highly likely that they will be light when they calve. Your chances of putting on condition during this time are greatly diminished almost to the point of non-existent. Light cows tend to be slow to cycle meaning that they will be later getting in calf or may end up empty. This roll on effect can be rectified by ensuring that you recognise the issue and are then committed to resolving it.

While feeding is critical for recovery, so is maintaining optimal animal health. A spring consult to discuss all aspects of your herd including weight loss minimisation between calving and mating, strategic use of non cycling treatments, synchronisation of mating and the use of supplement trace elements such as calcium and magnesium will help optimise production and reproduction.

The Transition Period

This refers to the period beginning 3 weeks pre calving until 3 weeks after calving. This period of time will be challenging for all concerned due to the dramatic changes in nutrient demands pre and post calving. This often results in an increased number of metabolic issues in the herd.

An increased demand for some of the nutrients required in the milk at calving can increase by 250%. The intake requirements of a cow increase accordingly, however the actual physical intake happens a lot more slowly. This results in a rapid change in the supply and demand of nutrients resulting in a shift in the cows metabolism.

The size of the cows liver and intestines increase as she mobilises stored body fat and breaks down muscle all within less than one week. If this period is not managed effectively to allow the necessary metabolic changes to occur, the result will be that a greater amount of stored body fat will be mobilised, liver function will be suppressed and the cows immune system is compromised. The consequences of this happening in your herd are sub optimal cow health resulting in poorer milk production and lasting effects of reproduction into next season.

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Metabolic Diseases - THE DOWNER COW

Nick Hansby

A downer cow is an EMERGENCY needing immediate attention!

To prevent the animal choking on rumen, sit the animal up and prop against a bale of hay, the 4 wheeler or the tractor.

To help with diagnosis, here are some symptoms of the metabolic diseases milk fever, grass staggers and ketosis. Remember that you can get these conditions occurring in combination or separately, which can affect the symptoms you see.

Generally:

MILK FEVER cows are mature animals within 12 hours of calving to 3 days post calving. They are often in good condition. It is caused by a sudden fall of calcium. The cow usually has a low temperature with weakness in leg muscles. The muzzle is dry, head kinked and or laying against the side. Faeces are hard or firm.

GRASS STAGGERS occurs in cows 2 years and older in winter and spring. Animals are nervous, high stepping. It can rapidly progress to recumbancy with convulsions. The brain cells require magnesium to function. Death can be rapid. Predisposing factors include high potassium pasture, bad weather, peak milk production.

KETOSIS is a very common subclinical disorder. Trial work suggests that 17% of dairy stock is ketotic. It can be seen in 2 year olds and older. The disease is caused by an energy imbalance resulting in the cow breaking down fat releasing ketones. Clinically the animals can be dopey, not eating with sudden shut down in milk production. Some animals display unusual behaviour including licking , circling , drunkenness, apparent blindness, sham drinking. The urine is positive for ketones. Their breath is sweet smelling.

AT SPRING CONSULT – PLEASE DISCUSS WITH US THE BEST TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR YOUR FARM.

Prevention of metabolic disease starts in winter

- Keep animals in the correct Body condition ie BCS 5 to 5.5
- Supplement magnesium 4 weeks pre-calving (causmag 60gms per cow per day)
- Cows prone to milk fever give VitAD 2 to 8 days pre-calving (discuss with vet)
- Supplement colostrum cows with lime flours at 100gms per cow per day
- Use Vit B12 immediate post calving to encourage appetite
- Rumescin post calving. Discuss which form with vets .

How to Avoid Early Season Residues

More than 30 per cent of all Inhibitory Substance grades and up to 50 per cent of clinical mastitis cases occur in the first month of a new season (Source: Fonterra).

The calving period is a particularly high-risk time for residue contamination, with a number of issues mainly due to antibiotic residues (from Dry Cow and lactational treatments), Teatseal[®] not being extracted correctly, and from colostrum not being withheld. Another reason for IS grades at calving is the insertion of DCT at dry off into cows which are producing low volumes of milk (i.e. less than 5L/day). It is also important to ensure that any three titters are marked clearly so that DCT is not inserted into a quarter which has been dried off during lactation.

If milk is supplied to processors with antibiotic, Teatseal® residues or colostrum present, it can result in quality issues with end products.

Teatseal® Treatments and Colostrum

Colostrum must be withheld from the vat for eight milkings following calving. Milk from heifers and any cows not letting their milk down should be withheld from the bulk milk tank for 10 milkings (Source: SmartSAMM).



Colostrum can only be supplied where there is a specific colostrum supply agreement and must not be added to the bulk milk tank for general supply.

To minimise the possibility of Teatseal and colostrum entering the milk supply, you must follow several steps:

- Colostrum cows and treated cows should be run in a separate herd and marked to ensure milk does not enter the vat.
- At the first milking after calving, each quarter must be stripped 10-12 times to remove any remaining Teatseal. Stripping should commence at the very top of the teat to ensure all product in the teat canal is removed.

In line with SmartSAMM recommendations, all cows must be stripped prior to each milking while in the colostrum mob.

- Colostrum and milk from DCT/Teatseal treated cows must be withheld from supply for eight milkings after calving.
- Filter socks must be in place throughout the milking and cleaning phases and disposable socks must be replaced after each colostrum mob milking.
- Correct milking machine processes should be strictly adhered to after each milking as per the manufacturer's specification. Hot washes are recommended after each colostrum mob milking. This ensures the removal of any colostrum or Teatseal particles that may adhere to the milk contact surfaces.

Managing Heifer Mastitis

Keith Webby

The experience of a heifer before and during her first milking season can make or break her future as a productive member of the herd.

The total cost per clinical mastitis case is about \$200.00, with the treatment component only being 25% of that total. Rearing costs and production losses account for the rest.

Teat-sealing is a valuable tool for reducing infections, but there are other management practices that can help.

1. Twice daily pick up of calves
2. Early detection of mastitis by stripping, especially in the colostrum mob and using the RMT before heifers join the milking herd.
3. Good milking management – attaining effective let down and good milking-out.

4. Minimising contact with mud and muck by choosing clean paddocks and the good management of gateway areas and raceways.
5. For the treatment of infections – injectable systemic antibiotics such as Penetheject or Mamazin are recommended.
6. The problem of udder-oedema and milk leakage can be a real issue with heifers. If you are having problems with severe udder oedema, then please contact the clinic to discuss some of the treatment options available.

If you purchased your dry cow and drench requirements from Vets on Alabama you will go in the draw to win one of five fishing gear prizes.

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