



SO HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO AGAIN 1 BCS ONCE I DRY MY LIGHT COWS OFF?

The answer is – always longer than you think!

It is well known about the benefits of individual whole herd body condition scoring. The reason for this is that each cow/heifer needs to get to her target at calving, but each animal is different based on her current BCS, her expected calving date, her age (and if she has any compensatory growing to do) and what you are going to feed her once she is dry. Of course, any underlying issues may negatively affect BCS gain as well such as facial eczema (clinical or subclinical), so if something pops up then the general rules may not apply to your cows. Remember the drying off process costs a lot of energy; therefore it is near impossible to gain BCS during the first 2 weeks after dry off, no matter how much you feed them. The table below is reproduced from page 79 of the new In Calf book (www.dairynz.co.nz/incalf).

Drying-off time based on BCS and time to calving to achieve the target BCS, based on cow age and BCS at dry off, when fed pasture only or pasture plus high-quality supplement.

Body condition score		Days cows need to be dry before calving	
Mature cows	First calvers (Rising 3-yr)	Autumn pasture (days)	Autumn pasture and high quality supplements (days)
3	3.5	160	120
3.5	4	130	100
4	4.5	100	80
4.5	5	70	60

Note: Includes 10 days when cows are being dried off and not gaining BCS and 30 days when cows do not gain BCS before calving. For this strategy to work, dry cows must be allocated a minimum of 9-11 kg DM/day depending on breed.



The key is that if you are going to use autumn pasture (providing it rains) to gain condition during the dry period the animals need to be dry for much longer. That is because it takes 20% more autumn pasture to gain one condition score than maize silage, pasture silage or PKE (all of which are similarly efficient at BCS gain during the dry period). If you do manage to gain some good autumn pasture growth then expecting autumn pasture to lead to condition gain while milking is plain unrealistic.

Supplements such as maize silage, good quality spring-made perennial pasture silage and PKE all are useful to add into the diet to achieve faster BCS gain (for milking or dry cows). However, when calculating the amount that you need to feed be sure to account for wastage (even when it is dry you will waste 10-15% of silage supplements if fed in the paddock).

Lets take a typical cow on the 10th March 2019:

- Friesian X heifer (end of her first lactation) in BCS 4
 - Due to calve 15th July
 - Maize silage is available (it takes 165kgDM of 10.5ME maize to gain 1 BCS in a 500kg cow)
- 4 She needs to be dried off on 6th April and offered 11kgDM of which 4kgDM needs to be the maize silage, this is essentially feeding her 4kgDM per day above her maintenance (on average). Obviously her maintenance requirements increase as she gets closer to calving (the fetus demands more food), therefore it is easier to put BCS on earlier in the dry period:
- 4 She should have been dried off last week if you only have autumn grass to feed her.

If you don't have the ability to allocate and feed her (i.e. its not in your feed budget) 11kgDM per day until the end of June then you will need to dry her off now.

Talk to us about how each cow in your herd can achieve BCS 5 and each heifer/second calver 5.5.

By Katrina Roberts, Anexa Vets, Herd Health Veterinarian

ARE YOU CULLING COWS?

Remember to plan your cattle's transport at least seven days ahead: their welfare is our responsibility.

1st: Is it fit to transport? Check in the DairyNZ "Checklist for Transporting Cows" booklet or "Fit for Transport Guideline" flow chart. MPI also have a free app for the same purpose - FIT For Transport.

Checklist for Transporting Cows: www.dairynz.co.nz/transportingstock

2nd: Where are they going, and do they need a veterinary certificate to allow them to be transported? Remember, shorter journeys are better, and veterinary certificates are only valid for 7 days.

3rd: Cattle should also be stood off green feed for at least four hours (no more than 6 hours if lactating). Water should be available.

4th: Cattle should receive magnesium supplements prior to transport and should also receive calcium with these if they are lactating. The last milking should be as close to possible prior to transport with extra teat spraying for protection against udder infections.

Following the guidelines helps prevent downer cows during transport and makes for happy outcomes for both cows and farmers.

COULD YOU SPOT A SCORE 2 COW?

To be clear: we're NOT talking BCS score 2 cow here – that is a sight we do not ever want to see. We're talking about lameness score 2.

Why does it matter?

- Lameness scoring or locomotion scoring ranges from score 0 through to 3, with 0 being non lame and score 3 three-legged lame. Score 1 cows are walking unevenly possibly with a slightly arched back and head bob when walking. Score 2 cows are lame, meaning they are favoring a leg, arching their back and bobbing the head. Follow this link to have a look at a DairyNZ video which explains this really well and helps you recognize these scores: <https://bit.ly/2MDYnpG>
- Score 3 cows are easy to recognize, however take a lot of time to treat and will have reduced production and compromised reproduction while affected and during recovery. Recognising a score 2 cow will therefore save money, time and reduce the chance of culling for lameness.

What does a score 2 cow look like?

- Walking slower than normal.
- Shortened stride – normally the back foot will land in the same spot as the front feet. This way, by conscious placement of the front foot to avoid stones, this will protect the back foot. When a cow is lame, the back foot will fall short of the front foot placement.
- Favoring a leg – this results in uneven weight bearing.
- The backbone looks arched when walking and standing.
- The head moves up and down – the weight of the head helps divert weight away from the sore leg. The head moves up when a sore front foot is touching the ground; the head moves down when a sore back foot is touching the ground.

Transport certification regulations specify cows with a score 0 and 1 are fit for transport, but cows with a lameness score 2 need veterinary certification. Score 3 cows can not be transported.

Train yourself and your staff to spot subtle differences in walking by observing the herd on your farm track. In time you will recognize changes and be able to draft cows earlier for treatment, sparing them a lot of pain.

If you would like some help with locomotion scoring training, or if you would like one of our vets to score your herd, please contact your clinic.

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ARE YOUR COWS GETTING ENOUGH ZINC TO BE PROTECTED?

As spore counts start to rise across the Central Waikato, it is good to see our farmers getting their zinc supplementation plans underway to protect all classes of stock against facial eczema.

Zinc prevents liver damage by binding with the fungal toxin, sporidesmin, rendering it inactive. It also inhibits absorption of copper in the intestine, which contributes to the formation of free radicals that cause liver damage.

However, there must be adequate levels of zinc in the individual animal in order for it to be protective against facial eczema.

Please phone us for the latest readings in Facial Eczema

How do we know whether animals have adequate levels of zinc?

Accurate dosing is the first step in helping to ensure that your animals have adequate zinc levels on board. However, we need to test the animals to ensure this is the case.

The easiest way to determine whether zinc levels are adequate in your herd is by testing blood zinc levels two weeks after full dosing is underway. The protective range for zinc levels in the blood is above 18umol/L. Anything under that is unlikely to be effective and the herd could suffer liver damage, leading to clinical cases and further problems throughout the year.

How will blood testing benefit me and my herd?

We know from previous years that blood zinc levels are highly variable, even when full dosing has been provided, with some herds having up to 80% of their cows with inadequate levels. This is commonly an issue when zinc is provided solely through water treatment, due to individual water intake being highly variable. This variability is affected by rainfall as well as individual cow factors; such as, age, milk production, and pecking order in the herd.

Information gained from zinc blood testing has allowed us to work with farmers to modify the zinc dosing accordingly, to ensure protective levels are met.

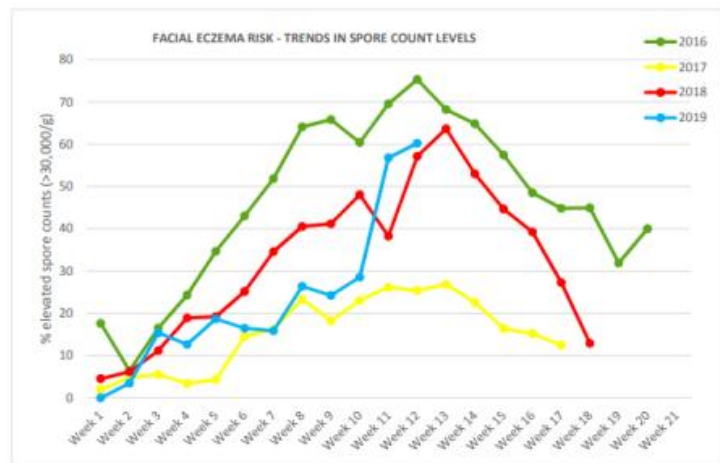
An investment in zinc blood testing is money well spent, as it ensures that your zinc supplementation plan is on track, reducing the risk of facial eczema in your herd.



Facial Eczema Risk and Incidence Monitor Report

Weekly Summary
Week 12 - 28 March 2019

FE Risk - National trends in spore count levels (% elevated above 30,000 spg)



Data provided by: Carlyle Vet Centre, Eitham Vet Services, Whitianga Vets, Bay Vets Edgecumbe, Anexa FVC Te Kauwhata, Wanganui Vets, Anexa FVC Gordonton, Vets North Helensville, New Plymouth Vet Group, Te Puke Vet Centre, Animal Health Services Rotorua, Anexa FVC Ngatea, Atkinson & Assoc. Vet Service Piopio, Vet Services Wairarapa, Hauraki Vets, Totally Vets Feilding, Top Vets Kaitiaki, Dargaville Vet Centre, Tirau Vet Centre, Taihape Vet Services, Totally Vets Taumaranui, Eastland Vet Services, VetsOne Hastings, Franklin Vets Pukekohe/ Papakura/ Taupiri/ Te Kauwhata

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