



Phew scanning is over, but my results are not what I expected!

Hopefully by now your herd scanning has been completed, results are in and you are either happy and now planning your dry off or perhaps you are disappointed and frustrated with a high empty rate or low 6-week in calf rate? Reproductive performance is one of the most important drivers of efficiency, profitability and easy management of your farming business.

As with most years, we are seeing a wide range in results with farmers. Some have achieved high 6-week in calf rates but subsequently high empty rates and others who's 6-week in calf rate has dropped significantly but empty rate is acceptable. Every farm has had its challenges this past year and you may want to right off this year's poor scanning results as attributed to the less than cooperative weather and its associated challenges. However, there are often multiple factors that can contribute to a poor result. Sitting down with your Vet can help highlight areas of concern and we can help formulate a plan for next season.

So, if your empty rate has left you short on culling options, or your 6-week InCalf rate is down, now is the time to look at what changes you need to make for a better result in 2020. A reproduction consultant can pick through this year's results and work out where to focus your time, effort and investment to get a better return next year.



Talk to your Vet or call your local clinic to arrange an introductory meeting. Next season's reproductive management starts now!

5 Benefits of hitting Body Condition Targets

Body condition scoring seems like an easy enough task at first glance, but it is more than just examining your own cows each day as they come into milk.

For all of us, the benefit of having a second pair of eyes take the time to assess a herd, that they are not seeing every day, means that we can differentiate between the normal routine of seeing your own cows and therefore assessing the herd against what is being observed in other herds.

This is the advantage of having a periodic assessment performed by an Accredited Body Condition Scorer.

Here are five benefits of hitting BCS targets for the late lactation/drying-off period (and five reasons why a second pair of "accredited" eyes is a good idea):

- Timing of drying off can be timed more accurately against feed availability (which seems to be see-sawing this summer) and current BCS
- If late season change to once-a-day milking is contemplated, this process can be fine tuned
- Cows will be better set up to successfully navigate the transition period
- Cows will be, potentially, better set up to minimize BCS losses into the early lactation period
- Cows are likely to have better reproduction and production outcomes if set up well for body condition through the dry period.



Did you know?

Most cows that we test for zinc levels are not being protected by their zinc regime.

Upon further investigation, common problems this year include:

Using the pre-calculated dosing amount on the front of the zinc packet, without calculating it to suit your herd.

Underestimating stock weight and under dosing is very common. Is your FxJ actually 450kg, and is your Jersey really 400kg, as suggested on some zinc product labels? Instead of relying on the pre-calculated guidelines, use the recommended dose rate (eg 5.5g zinc monohydrate/ 100kg Lwt) and calculate the right amount for your herd specifically.

Not weighing your scoop. Near enough is certainly not good enough when it comes to zinc dosing. We have had some shocked farmers after we have weighed out their daily zinc requirement - often it is FAR MORE than they imagined. Kitchen scales work well to weigh your scoop/s. Mark the weight on a jug, to ensure your scoop is accurate every day. If you don't have scales, bring some of your product and your jug/measuring vessel into your vet clinic; we are happy to weigh it out and mark how much you need

When we are lucky enough to experience a wet summer, our cows rely less on trough water due to surface water.

Palatability is an issue with zinc supplementation, and cows will often prefer rainwater. Getting cows back onto the trough water after a couple of days rain can be tricky. Use a flavour enhancer like aniseed or caramel to increase the palatability of the trough water. Reassess your delivery system- if cows aren't drinking the water reliably, maybe it's time for a change.

Drenching of young stock or in-feed zinc additives for cow are much more reliable methods of supplementation - but we have certainly found cows that are not getting enough zinc with these methods as well. Conversely, we have also experienced situations where cows are getting too much zinc. This can manifest as milk fever, as well as other serious illnesses leading to production loss, abortion, anaemia and liver failure.

Ultimately, the most reliable source of zinc supplementation is bolusing (provided weights have not been underestimated and top-up boluses are given on time). Young stock and dry stock should always be bolused, as they will not drink enough water to give them protection.

Talk to your local Vet to discuss your zinc programme - we're here to help.

Biosecurity Tips



Farm biosecurity has become a hot topic recently and tackling this on your farm can seem quite daunting but luckily even doing the basics can help prevent an unwanted disease entering your farm. So, what is farm biosecurity? Farm biosecurity is essentially reducing the risk of bringing unwanted diseases, weeds or pests onto your farm. If you haven't thought about farm biosecurity, here are some tips to get you started.

1. Personal hygiene – Anyone coming onto your farm should have clean boots and clothes/overalls. Make sure you provide clean water, bucket, scrub brush and disinfectant. Foot baths are an excellent idea but the disinfectant needs to be replaced daily. Remember that disinfection only works after the excess mud and muck has been removed.

2. Purchasing new stock - You should know the vaccination status and animal health history, including any prior testing for diseases such as BVD, for all stock prior to purchase and if that cannot be provided by the seller or their agent then avoid "buying in a problem" and do not purchase that stock!

3. Grazing stock off-farm – When your young stock are away they are at risk of picking up diseases and then bringing them back home. Prevention is the key here, so make sure they have all their required vaccinations and drenches prior to leaving your farm and ensure that the grazer completes any follow up vaccinations and drenches that are required.

4. Boundary fences – Make sure you avoid nose to nose contact between your stock and the stock on your neighbour's farm as this is a great way for diseases to be spread farm to farm. Double fencing your boundary (at least 2 meters apart) or hedges are good ways to prevent nose to nose contact.

5. Farm equipment – Vehicles, equipment and farm machinery can potentially carry diseases or unwanted weeds and pests. These should be clean prior to arrival on your farm, particularly if they are going beyond the tanker track. If they aren't clean, then provide an area where they can be washed down and ideally disinfected but ensure this water doesn't go into your waterways or waste water irrigation system as this can spread unwanted weeds and diseases.

Good farming biosecurity practices will help lessen your risk of unwanted diseases, pests and weeds coming onto your farm. If you have any questions regarding farm biosecurity or you would like help to set up a plan, then contact your Vet, we're here to help.