



farmVets

The Vet Centre

NEWSLETTER

November 2019

Weaning Woes and Mating Mysteries

This is a very busy time of the year! Mating and AB are starting, crops are going in, and silage is being cut. At the same time we often have lingering spring weather and animal health issues. But, among all of this chaos, you can't afford to forget your young stock!

Calves - how do you wean your calves?

Hopefully they are weaned in batches, but how do you pick those batches? You can choose calves based on age, but not all calves are ready at the same time. Commonly suggested weight targets for weaning are 70kg for Jerseys, 80kg for Fr x J Crossbreds, and 90kg for Friesians, with many suggesting these are minimums. The other factor to use when deciding who to wean is the "rumen score". Calves with well developed rumens are not 'slabsided', but instead have a well rounded rumen visible on the left side of the body. You can also use consumption as a weaning guide. Calves eating more than 1kg/day can be weaned - but this means the average mob intake needs to be about 1.3-1.4kg/day over a few days to ensure that ALL animals are eating more than 1kg.

Don't wean too early!

It is very tempting to stop feeding calves during this busy time by weaning late calves a bit early. DON'T DO IT! These late calves are already a few steps behind their earlier mates - weaning them early will set them back even more! Late calves should actually be weaned later/heavier than early calves. For more detailed information on weaning decisions see DairyNZ's info sheet here:

<http://bit.ly/WeaningDecisions>

Heifers - mating weights should not be a mystery!

Weigh your heifers! Heifers should be 60% of mature weight at mating. Pre-mating weigh in (or even during mating!) is also a good time to talk to your vet about trace element supplementation. We are seeing a lot of youngstock deficient in Selenium and Copper. Don't be disappointed with your heifers at calving - go weigh them now, while there is still time to do something about it.

5 Reasons Milk Cultures after herd testing will benefit you

1) Make the right call with your high somatic cell count cows.

Make a more informed and cost-effective decision about what to do with these cows, whether they are known problem cows, repeat offenders or cows from the latest herd test. Based on the milk culture results you may choose not to inseminate these high SCC cows or cull them before the summer dry.

2) Identify cows with chronic Staph aureus infections.

Staph aureus is a common cause of subclinical and clinical mastitis. Infected cows are the main source of infection and infection can easily spread from cow to cow. This is usually during milking via infected milk on liners and milker's hands. It is important to identify these cows so action can be taken to stop infection spreading to the rest of the herd. When you are splitting your herds coming into mating, cows infected with Staph could join the last milking herd, to reduce the chance of them infecting other cows.

3) Prevent further issues in the herd.

By knowing the bugs which are present we can determine what the most important risk factors are in your herd and spend your efforts in the right area e.g. Muddy areas of the farm, feed pad or herd home, removing infected cows in the herd, teat spraying or the milking machine.

4) Prepare the herd for once a day (OAD) milking.

Around Christmas time, many clients like to be able to choose to reduce their milking frequency. However, with a high percentage of infected cows or with a known Staph problem in your herd you may have to tread carefully with the use of OAD. You will need to be much more aware of how you manage the transition to OAD. Milk cultures are a useful tool to help with dealing with these high SCC cows before your transition to OAD.

5) Achieve the thresholds for incentives offered by some dairy companies for low SCC milk.

In a 300 cow herd, achieving the SCC premium zone throughout the whole season could be worth an extra \$9,000. Taking action against high SCC cows earlier in the season gives you more options and being proactive at peak milk time will help maintain a low BMSCC through mid and late lactation as production drops and BMSCCs rise.



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“I’m putting one less cow up a day during AB, but that’s okay isn’t it?”

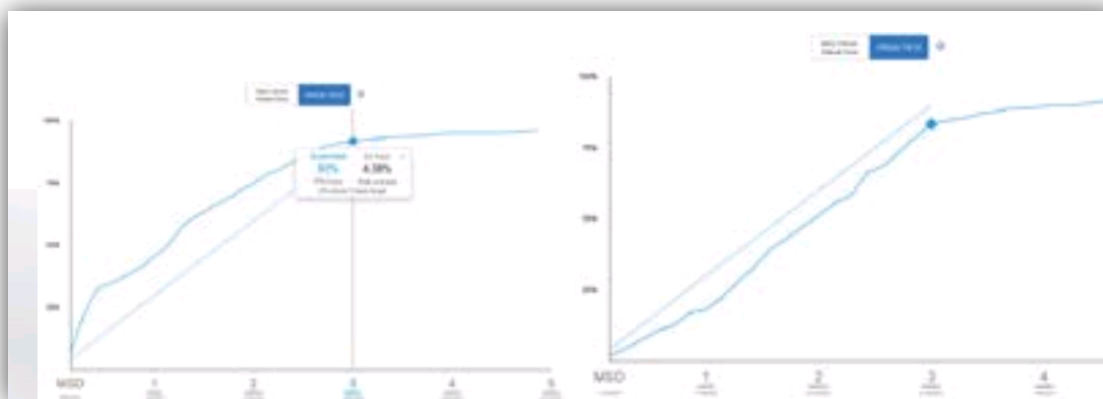
Let’s do the sums. We all know that the target 3-week submission rate is 90%. To achieve target 3 and 6 week in-calf rates (54% and 78% respectively), this submission rate is not negotiable. Herds that achieve these in-calf targets are all achieving a 3-week submission rate of 90%. That said, the national average for the 3-week submission rate is only 80%, which means a large number of herds are not achieving the 90% target.

To achieve a 90% 3-week submission rate, we need to submit 4.3% of the herd every day for the 21 days. For a 300-cow herd, that equals 13 cows per day. If we only submit 12 cows per day over this period, then by the end of week 3 we have only hit 84%, which is certainly below optimal.

Trying to monitor this daily is more difficult, as we won’t get even numbers every day. We also have factors such as CIDRs and synchrony programmes that will also upset the daily

pattern. There are some useful tools available on Minda Web and on the Minda mating Apps to help monitor your daily submission rate. The graphs below, which are updated daily, can easily demonstrate if you are dropping below the target line. The herd below used CIDRs on day one for non-cyclers and used a prostaglandin synchrony programme in the cycling cows as well, which is the second big jump in the second week, and then things flatten off in week three.

If you do not use the graph to monitor your performance, you can do a quick calculation: number of cows to be mated minus the number of cows CIDR’d multiplied by 90% and divided by 21 days. This will be the number of cows daily (e.g. 300 cows – 30 CIDRs = 270 cows * 90% = 244 cows/21days = 11.6/day. So, if 30 CIDRs are used in a 300 cow herd at the beginning or before PSM, then we need 12 cows daily not the original 13.)



The Graph 1 shows a herd using early non-cycler treatment and a Why Wait – PG program. They are above target (dotted blue line) submission rate for the entire first 3 weeks

Graph 2. On this farm, it is clear from early in mating that the target submission rate (the dotted line) would not be reached without some intervention. Treating the non cyclers after the first week would have helped here.





Maintaining Pasture Quality leading into Mating

If you are one of the lucky farmers with farm pasture covers ahead of normal due to unusual weather patterns you may need to make management decision 10 to 20 days ahead of usual. The end result is having to control post grazing residuals that may have been left too high in the last grazing, or in many cases the current round length is a lot longer than usual to make the cows graze to close to target residuals. In both of these situations cows are potentially eating poorer quality pasture heading into mating, either because the pasture is too long or the residuals being eaten into are low quality, and maintaining a longer round is simply perpetuating this.

The two major management strategies are speeding up the round by harvesting surplus as silage or dropping paddocks out for cropping and/or topping.

- Dropping paddocks out for silage - visit http://bit.ly/DairyNZ_PastureSurplus a DairyNZ infosheet on Surplus Management, including how to calculate what area to take as surplus. However if by the time this article is published you are one of the farms that still finds itself with 200-400kgDM/ha cover more than target and “trapped” on a longer round, then removing silage for control will be based on getting back to entry covers needed on the area you want to feed, as well as anticipated growth and surplus in the future.
- Topping - Often when paddocks can't be removed for silage (for example you already have enough area out of the round) but were either left too long last grazing or will be too long this grazing, then topping in front of the cows to the required residual is a good option. This can be done as full paddocks or “half a paddock” each grazing if you wish to minimise the risk of growth slowing

The essential point here is that you want residuals at 1500-1600kgDM/ha for best quality re-growth.

What does May 2020 mean to people who work with animals in New Zealand?

This is when the law for Significant Surgical Procedures (SSP) comes into force. It will affect such procedures as horse dentistry and aims to propose clearer rules about who can carry out certain procedures on animals and how they must be done. There was public consultation during July 2019 and those documents are available on the MPI website. If you want to know more about the changes in our Animal Welfare legislation and how they affect you, ask your veterinarian. Below are some important ones that you as a farmer or animal carer should be aware of.

50. Docking cattle tails. (From the 1st October 2018)

- You are prohibited from removing any part of a cow's tail.
- If a cow's tail needs to be docked due to injury, talk to your veterinarian as it needs to be done using pain relief.
- If you dock a cow's tail you could face a criminal conviction and a fine of up to \$3,000 for an individual, or \$15,000 for the business.

53. Castrating cattle and sheep (from the 1st October 2018)

- You must not castrate cattle and sheep over 6 months old, without using local anaesthetic.
- You must not castrate cattle and sheep at any age with a high tension band, without using local anaesthetic.
- Failure to comply with this regulation could result in a criminal conviction and a fine of up to \$3,000 for an individual, or \$15,000 for the business.
- A high tension band is one that is mechanically tightened during application (doesn't include a rubber ring).

57. Disbudding cattle beasts

58. Dehorning cattle beasts

Disbudding and dehorning are painful.

- From 1 October 2019, local anaesthetic must be used when disbudding and dehorning cattle.
 - If you disbud calves without using effective local anaesthetic you could face a criminal conviction and a fine of up to \$3,000 for an individual, or \$15,000 for the business.
 - If you dehorn cattle without using effective local anaesthetic you could face a criminal conviction and a fine of up to \$5,000 for an individual, or \$25,000 for the business.
 - This procedure isn't limited to veterinarians – have a conversation with your veterinarian about training and the supply of local anaesthetic.
 - Talk to your disbudding contractor and make sure they're up to speed with the requirements.
 - Avoid having to dehorn older cattle by using polled breeds, or disbudding them as young calves. Consider horn management with purchasing cattle.