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# DAIRY NEWSLETTER

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## KVC Bovine Update December 2017

It's a BEAUTIFUL sunny afternoon in late November as I write this and we've been given a few more days to finish off the field work before that wonderful white stuff blows in! There is not much left of 2017 in what has been a crazy year for weather, cows and for dairy producers. I am just back from a meeting with other bovine veterinarians to provide feedback and receive new information on the products and value added tools available from Elanco. There was plenty of discussion around Imrestor and Kexxtone boluses, vaccines and coccidia but, as with most preventative health products they are used at an important time in the cow's lactation to increase her chances of being a successful contributor to the herd's profitability.

As most dairy producers are trying to get more milk down the driveway from existing facilities and pushing to keep extra cows around it is important to look at some of the bottlenecks that we see on the farms we call upon. There are 3 major economic drivers on dairies that are irrelevant of robots vs parlours, sand vs mats, free vs tie stalls that every dairy person should be watching regularly. Firstly, **get them pregnant** as soon as it is appropriate. Next, **calve them out** so they survive past peak lactation. And thirdly get as **much healthy butterfat** per cow (or stall) as you can. Each of these points will provide cash either now or in the upcoming months and are critical to keep the farm in the business of (*servicing debt!*) dairy farming. There are benchmarks for each of these points with several articles on what each point of improvement will yield in \$ or how much each case of each disease costs, but at the end of the day, especially in the current market, we need to be looking more closely at and eliminating the larger kinks in the pipe of the system.

1) Preg Rate – most people know that having a preg rate in the mid 20's is profitable. This is a function of breeding enough cows (heat detection rate) and getting a decent amount of them pregnant (conception rate). Historically a 50 day voluntary waiting period (VWP) was industry standard but many herds have moved to one that fits better with milk production level. The 21 days after the VWP is over should see 70-90% of the eligible cows receiving semen. This is usually accomplished by using a synchronization program and investment here has a large return. Review your breeding program at next herd check.

2) Calving and Culling– the transition period from dry off to the 30 days post calving is the most important and most expensive part of the cows lactation. Getting them through this successfully is an economic driver because of the immediate return on that investment made at dry off and at calving. A number that is often overlooked is the number of culled (or dead) animals under 60 days in milk. If she leaves before peak you have lost both the investment and the potential milk. This number can be hard to generate but take a minute at next herd health with your vet to see what your number might be.

3) Kgs of Butterfat – obviously the entire system revolves around shipping butterfat. The more you can send out, the more money will come back. Maintaining healthy components and shipping as many kgs per cow will contribute to the farm's economic efficiency. In today's market you may be looking at kgs per stall vs kgs per animal as many operations are exploring the limits of what their facility can do. Marginal milk is the



milk produced by adding 1-2-3 more cows in to the system. They are marginal because they do not bear the same fixed costs of production that the animals already there have to carry. These marginal cows only require the added expense of feed and a little more labour to have them around. There is a huge profit to be realized with these cows but with one major caveat: the extra cow does not decrease the performance of the original animals by tipping the limits on cow comfort, bunk space etc.

With these three economic drivers we see that having a steady stream of pregnant animals (preg rate) coming through the transition period with very few bumps along the way can lead to a successful lactation. Once she starts her lactation we want to remove any interference that will decrease the expression of her genetic potential, optimizing her comfort.

The tools we have available to look more closely at these 3 drivers include using your computer records to evaluate preg rate and all the contributing numbers. Elanco has 2 investigation tools that we have found very helpful; the Vital 90 app that explores all the facility and management details from 60 days from calving to 30 days post calving, and the economic assessment tool that uses your herd information on disease rates and treatment protocols to establish what it costs to calve a cow out on your farm. Monitoring for ketosis and addressing hypocalcaemia at calving are not sexy or new problems but they are still interventions that will reduce losses in the first 60 days.

So as you get the machinery put away and the Christmas shopping done think about which health or performance issue you'd like to tackle this winter. We have spent time reviewing sick cow treatment protocols for CQM but maybe there are preventative or performance interventions and management changes that can be implemented to increase your success in one of the 3 areas mentioned.

### **KVC Calf Club**

Are you looking for new ideas to improve your current calf management program?

Do you learn well through discussions and demonstrations with and by other area producers?

The KVC Calf Club will be starting again on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This Focus Farm group will discuss various issues relating to calf rearing and management. A "Focus Farm" is an alternative learning strategy whereby small groups of participants tour facilities, discuss topics and share ideas. Topics of discussion will be directed by the group participants and ideas will be supported through the use of personal experiences and expert knowledge. Our first topic will be "Calf Care – Day 0: What to do with cows and calves."

**Call the clinic today at 519-229-8911 if you are interested in being a part of this exciting learning opportunity!**





**Please note emergency services  
will NOT be affected.**

Please don't drink and drive and have a Happy Moo Year!