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## APRIL 2023 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

In March we had another great meeting at River Valley with outstanding attendance. Thank you to all of you that attended. We hope that you were able to take away practical information to implement positive changes on your operation.

Below is a summary of the main take home points from each speaker:

### **Top Habits for Reproductive Success in your herd - Dr. Jocelyn Dubuc**

1. Always know what is going on in your barn – know your data
  - Eg: Preg, Conception and Insemination Rate, SCC, MUN, Dry matters, BF%, % disease
2. Build a strategy to achieve a 25% pregnancy rate
3. Use help from your advisors
  - Consider meeting every quarter or biannually to discuss and measure goals
4. Minimize things that pull you down → Control things that can be controlled
5. Test for subclinical diseases when recommended → Find the hidden obstacles and fix them
6. Heat stress: what's your plan to mitigate it?
7. Avoid feed changes whenever possible
8. Heifers: should be easy, if there is a problem it is usually created by a human
  - Manage heifer reproduction that same way you manage the cows

→The Best farms: Never let anything that you have control over pull you down!

### **Heifer Management – Drs. Robyn and Reg**

- 1) Wean over a minimum of 7 days, 14 days is best
  - Fresh water and starter must always be available
- 2) Wait until 6 months of age to feed silage
  - Gradually introduce silage in the pen before silage (TMR) is the sole feed by giving a small amount along with their previous ration
- 3) Body Condition – most heifers are too fat
  - Aim for Body Condition Score of 3.5 for heifers under 10 months
  - 10 months and older aim for Body Condition Score of 2.75 - 3.0
- 4) Inventory
  - Most farms have too many heifers – average is 100% (Heifers:Cows)
  - Use 90% (90 heifers for every 100 cows) as a safe first step
  - Set up a meeting with your herd veterinarian to work out what number is comfortable for your operation based on previous culling rates, longevity, disease pressure etc
  - Don't forget to adjust your breeding strategy so you also reduce the number of heifers you are generating

## 5) Culling

- Start with the obvious: treated for previous pneumonia more than once, severe diarrhea, poor confirmation, clinical coccidiosis
- Start fine tuning your replacements by culling based on: ADG, Reproductive success (>3 breedings), Dam 305M, Genomics and when they are projected to calve

## **Dry Cow Management - Dr. Ray Reynen**

### 1) Minimize Transition Diseases

- Conception rate decreases by 19% if cows experience 1 transition disease, 50% if they experience 2 diseases
- Subclinical Ketosis in the first week = 3.7L/day less milk for the entire lactation

### 2) Dry Period Length

- To minimize ketosis dry period length should be 42-56 days
- Move to the close up group/ration minimum 24 days before expected calving date (add 14 days if carrying twins)
- Know your herd's gestation length – make sure you aren't short changing their dry period

### 3) Housing

- Far Off Cows
  - Minimum 80 square feet of pack, 3in/cow water space and 24in/cow bunk space
- Close Up Cows
  - Minimum 100sq feet, 4in/cow water space and 30in/cow feed bunk
- 2 water sources for each group is a must!!
  - 80% of Canadian farms do not have enough water space for their dry cows
- Ventilation: when done appropriately
  - 5L/day increase in production
  - Less sickness in calves when the dam was cooled during late gestation AND 2L/day increase in milk production when they calve in
  - Panel fans move air at the correct speed for 6-8 ft x diameter of the fan
    - Eg. 4 ft fan x 8 ft throw = 32ft of effective air movement, place fans 32 ft apart
  - High volume Low speed fans (Big Ass fans)
    - Not effective at cooling cows, leave large areas of dead, stale air

### 4) Social

- Move animals into group pens pairs or groups, ideally weekly
- Multiple access points for feed and water, boss cows can control 1 resource but not 2

### 5) Nutrition

- Chop length of straw/hay is very important to reduce sorting
  - Average length should be 0.75-1.0 inches with none above 2.0 inches
  - Shaker box – each level should have 1/3
- Limit overall energy level (Far Off)
  - 1.32% NeL Mcal/kg or 17.0 Mcal per day of NeL
- Manage Calcium (Close Up)
  - Calcium binder
  - Anionic salts

### 6) Intervention

- 3 Most Impactful Products:
  - 1) Kexxtone boluses (4:1 ROI)
  - 2) Vaccines (coliform mastitis, calf diarrhea)
  - 3) Calcium and Phosphorous boluses

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