



SEPTEMBER 2024 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

Dry-Off Strategies

Bovikalc Dry- A New Tool in the Toolbox

As production and reproduction continue to improve, the discussion around how to best dry off high producing cows continues. After dry-off, the mammary gland continues to produce milk. The udder will become congested and can start to leak milk from the teats. When animals leak milk after dry-off, their teat sphincter stays open which allows bacteria to invade the udder, potentially causing mastitis. In addition, most of the Dry Cow Mastitis Treatment that may have been administered at dry-off, leaks out and will no longer be effective. Research has shown that for every 5kg of extra milk produced over 12kg at dry-off, the intramammary infection risk at calving increases by 80%.

Currently, we have 2 management strategies and 1 new preventative strategy at our disposal to help reduce milk production at dry-off.

Intermittent Milking

Cows are milked less frequently for a number of days before dry-off. If they are currently milked two or three times a day, they would be milked once daily for 5-7 days and then dried off. The increased pressure in the udder between milkings helps speed up involution without causing leaking.

Decreased Caloric Intake

This typically involves drastically decreasing the energy in the ration 5-14 days before dry-off. On some farms, this is as simple as feeding a hay only diet or a dry cow diet in a separate pen. This caloric reduction results in a negative energy balance and causes the cow to mobilize some of her body fat reserves. If this negative energy balance is too severe, it will increase her risk of developing metabolic problems such as ketosis or fatty liver. It is important that water, minerals and salt are not restricted during this drying-off process to minimize the degree and duration of

the negative energy balance. This process is very easy to accomplish in tie-stall barns. In freestall barns, it would require a separate pen for these cows during the pre-dry-off period. In barns with robotic milking systems, these cows would have to be housed in a separate pen and fetched through the robot as their allotted amount of robot pellet would be very restricted.

NEW Bovikal[®] Dry Bolus

These boluses are administered at dry-off and contain anionic salts designed to decrease the pH of the blood. This temporarily decreases feed intake limiting available energy and decreasing milk production, similar to a DCAD diet. Studies have shown that cows given two Bovikal[®] Dry boluses at dry-off have a 10% decrease in milk production resulting in decreased udder pressure and decreased leakage of milk. Not only does this decrease mastitis risk, it also increases cow comfort during dry-off. These boluses are just one more tool in our toolbox to combat mastitis when drying-off high producing cows.



If you have any questions regarding Bovikal[®] Dry or would like to give them a try, talk to your veterinarian to come up with a plan that works for your herd!