

Dairy update of the Westpoint Veterinary Group

Fertility – a key driver for milk production.

As conception rates continue to fall, submission rates need to increase. Ultimately this means heat detection must improve probably by learning to use heat detection systems and aids, and to use secondary signs of heat as we once used the standing cow.

Hot up Heat Detection!

Fertility of dairy cattle is declining at an alarming rate and could be costing up to 2ppl on farm. UK conception rates are below 40% on average and are said to be falling by 1% year on year. Heat Detection and Submission Rates still prove to be key factors that herdsmen can impact upon on farm and is an essential part of reproductive management.

Improving Heat Detection Rate to 60% can reduce calving to conception by 4 days and culling rate by 6% improving profitability by 1ppl!

A quick analysis on Interherd will often flag up whether heat detection is good or not. We can see in the bar graph opposite that if cows are served accurately they are more likely to become pregnant (green bar) So if this is true why are we not achieving better oestrus detection and how can we improve it?

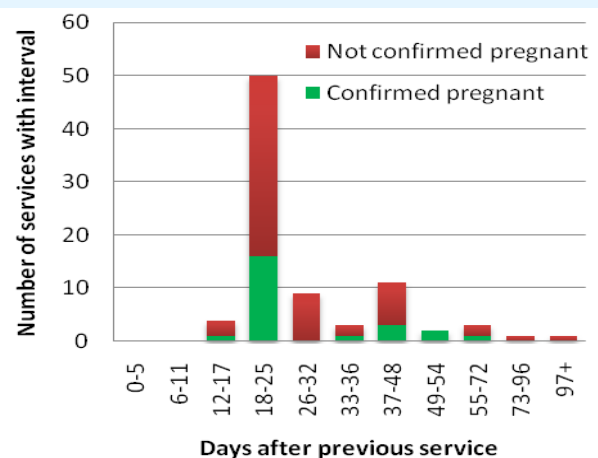
It is unsurprising that oestrus detection rates have reduced on farm. Factors affecting cows displaying heat include:

- **Increased number of cows per labour unit** on farms.
- **Uterine disease** affecting return of ovarian follicular cycles.
- **Post-calving negative energy balance.**
- **Lameness.**
- **Heat stress.**

More and more cows do not seem to be showing true standing heat but exhibit secondary signs



- Chin resting
- Head mounting
- Sniffing vagina
- Restlessness
- Bulling string
- Reduced intakes



Knowing, looking, recording and acting upon these secondary signs will improve your oestrus detection and hopefully your pregnancy rates.

To ensure cows do get served many techniques can be employed to help identify the bulling cow. These include **Kamars, Tailpaint, Automated heat detection systems, Vasectomised bulls and finally Synchronisation with timed insemination.** Speak to your vet to find out which system may suits your farm.

No oestrus detection aid will work without you – the herdsman!

BVD – does it matter?

Can you protect cows against Ecoli?

An important aspect of the dry period is udder recovery and repair. Protection from new infection is also vital towards the next lactation and good milk production. Teat seals, antibiotics and good environment can help but other aspects are important.

Enviracor: a vaccine used successfully in over 90% of all US dairy cows to help protect against E.coli mastitis has just been re-launched in the UK.

Enviracor works by increasing immunity against E.coli in the udder by protecting against a part of the bacteria (J5-antigen).

Vaccine use: Most mastitis caused by E.coli occurs between calving and peak lactation. Administered using a three shot program:

- A 2ml dose at dry off.
- Second dose half way through dry period or on entering transition group.
- Third/final dose at calving or within the first two weeks of lactation.

This program ensures the maximum immunity during the greatest risk period.

Do you need to vaccinate?

The mastitis lab has seen more E.coli mastitis recently – not just the classic, acute toxic cases, but

simple infections even with cows at pasture.

Increased stocking density, the rising cost of bedding and the knowledge that up to 50% of mastitis can be down to E.coli, vaccination could prove a sound investment.

A cost calculator can be used to investigate the true cost of E.coli on your farm plus the possible savings vaccination could bring.

Several herds have benefited by vaccinating – why not contact the practice to discuss looking at the costs to your farm?



Is your dry-cow therapy working?

Few farms actually monitor the success of their treatment program and could be missing out on quality payments and better mastitis cure rates.

Recent research has shown the individual cell count (SCC) at 4 days post calving reflects the SCC that cow will have at her first recording in over 90% of cows. Thus, by monitoring an individual cow SCC before she contributes to the bulk tank the SCC could be checked and decisions made early that could affect bulk tank quality levels and farm profits.

Cell counting through the Westpoint mastitis lab gives a quick result for as little as £1.50 per test. This can give a convenient and cost effective way to identify problem cows plus provide an accurate assessment of the farm dry-cow period and therapy effectiveness.

For more information on the Fresh Cow Cell Count Program, or on the services of the Westpoint Mastitis Lab, please call Westpoint Veterinary Group on 01306 628086.

Look after the calving and post-calving cow...

It is easy to forget that calving can have a real impact on the next lactation. Minimising stress around calving can reduce both the incidence of post calving disease (retained membranes, LDA and metritis) and help maximise milk production by maintaining dry matter intake (DMI).

Work in New Zealand and the UK has shown giving an anti-inflammatory injection to heifers and “at risk” cows at calving can result in significantly increased milk yield and better performance.

Administering **Ketofen** to heifers at calving produced up to 2L more daily milk in the first 100 days. Ketofen works by reducing problems with udder oedema, bruising, knuckling and lameness plus helps keep temperatures down due to infection.

At calving the immune system is depressed – through stress and to reduce rejection of the calf too early – and this can allow infections and parasites to take hold. Worm numbers that would not normally be a problem can cause a significant drain. Worming with **Eprinex** at calving has been shown to increase both milk yield and fertility.

Fresh Cow Cell Count Program – can be used on a routine or strategic basis to help identify:

1. **Failed dry period therapy.**
Check all cows that were over SCC 200 000 at dry off. Find cows with a persistent SCC.
2. **New high SCC cows** – possibly infected in the dry period.
3. **Early treatment cows** – reduce the cell count effect in the coming lactation.
4. **Cull cows early** – cows with persistent or recurrent high SCC.