

## July 2014

Despite the lovely weather and huge quantities of grass /silage that have been cut we need to be very aware that the energy content of the forage is not that good. We have seen a **big drop in fertility in the dairy herds** which turn their cattle out. The drop in fertility is seen not only from cattle **not holding when they are served** but also they are **not showing bulling**. **What can you do about this?**

1. **Keep your dry cows housed.....** We know that the follicle which is eventually fertilized is recruited **3 months prior to ovulation**, this generally coincides with the **dry period**. If the cattle are struggling at this period then a poor egg is recruited but if they are doing well, receiving a **well-balanced diet** then this follicle will be of **optimum quality**.

Likewise a good dry cow diet **reduces ketosis and milk fever**. Remember the worse cases of milk fever show as down cows, but **sub clinical milk fever** is probably costing more. With this we see a fall in **expected milk yield**, an increase in **mastitis and whites**, a **higher number of LDA's and gut problems**, **delayed calving** leading to a dead calf.

- **The same principles very much apply to beef.**

2. **Improve your oestrus detection:** How many of you are watching your cows for **½ hour in the morning prior to milking, ½ hour in the middle of the day and ½ hour last thing**. This doesn't mean watching whilst pushing up silage etc. These times are when **cows naturally show the best bulling signs**, but in the busy lives we all lead this attention to detail is lost. The problem is that the **Holstein has markedly reduced the length of time it shows bulling**.

- There are also many **oestrus aids** such as collars, oestrus alert stickers etc.
- A **teaser bull** works very effectively however you need to be careful that he doesn't get nasty.

3. **Regular fertility visits** will tell you if your cows are pregnant or not. **How many people assume their cows are in calf because they don't see them bulling.....** but when the milk yield drops they suddenly start to bull again.

- The fertility visit will also tell you if the **cows are cycling** and when they are **going to come bulling**. We are also able to **manipulate the cycle** to allow fixed time AI, which reduces the need to watch them.

4. **Buffer feed your cows.** Turning them out at night but keeping them in during the day.

5. **Keep your cows cool** with plenty of good quality drinking water. This can be achieved by fans in the shed.

- Remember that the **critical temperature of a cow is 25°C**.

### Other problems include:

1. **Poor doing calves:** This can be attributed to poor nutrition due to the lack of **energy** in the grass. Not having a good and robust **worming / coccidiosis** strategy. **Concurrent disease** such as BVD and pneumonia.

2. **Sudden death in youngstock:** This has been caused by **clostridial disease** (strike), remember there is a very good and economic vaccine which can save you a fortune (Bravoxin 10).

3. **Mastitis in ewes:** From poor nutrition, orf on the udders.

4. **Blow fly strike.** The insect growth regulators ie Clik / clikzine are far better at preventing compared with the synthetic pyrethroids due to the better fleece cover.

5. **Lameness in sheep.** Follow the five point plan:

- **Treat clinical cases early.** Treating lame sheep early brings strong financial and performance benefits, with a greater proportion of lambs from early treated ewes staying alive and growing faster.
- **Vaccinate animals to stimulate immunity.** Vaccination against footrot should be part of a whole flock approach to disease control. The aim is to raise immunity within the flock to help improve the success of the other disease steps.
- **Avoid spreading infection at gathering and handling.** Ensure sheep handling areas are clean and well drained; dirty concrete is just as bad as soil.
- **Quarantine incoming animals.** Make sure a good procedure is in place to separate bought-in stock for four weeks after purchase.
- **Cull badly or repeatedly affected animals.** When a ewe has had more than one bout of footrot in a season she should be given a cull tag. This will help prevent the cycle of infection. Culling may be high in the first year, but will reduce dramatically thereafter.

### Synchronisation of ewes:

Option 1:  
**Regulin implant.**

Option 3:  
**Sponges:**

Inserted for **12 – 14 days**

### Option 2:

#### **Teaser:**

- Introduce your teaser tup to the group of ewes and leave in there for a **minimum of 2 days ideally 1 week**. It needs to be a sexually active ram with good libido.
- Introduce your **fertile ram 14 days** after the introduction of the teaser tup. The **ratio of rams to ewes should be 1 : 30**.