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Phew scanning is over, but my results are not what I expected!

By David Dymock, Veterinarian, Anexa Rototuna

Hopefully by now your herd scanning has been completed, results are in and you are either happy and now planning your dry off or perhaps you are disappointed and frustrated with a high empty rate or low 6-week in calf rate? Reproductive performance is one of the most important drivers of efficiency, profitability and easy management of your farming business.

As with most years, we are seeing a wide range in results with farmers. Some have achieved high 6-week in calf rates but subsequently high empty rates and others who's 6-week in calf rate has dropped significantly but empty rate is acceptable. Every farm has had its challenges this past year and you may want to right off this year's poor scanning results as attributed to the less than cooperative weather and its associated challenges. However, there are often multiple factors that can contribute to a poor result. Sitting down with your Vet can help highlight areas of concern and we can help formulate a plan for next season.

So, if your empty rate has left you short on culling options, or your 6-week InCalf rate is down, **now** is the time to look at what changes you need to make for a better result in 2018. Anexa has many InCalf-trained reproduction consultants who can pick through this year's results and work out where to focus your time, effort and investment to get a better return next year.

Talk to your Vet or call your local clinic to arrange an introductory meeting. Next season's reproductive management starts now!



5 Benefits of hitting Body Condition Targets

Body condition scoring seems like an easy enough task at first glance, but it is more than just examining your own cows each day as they come into milk. For all of us, the benefit of having a second pair of eyes take the time to assess a herd, that they are not seeing every day, means that we can differentiate between the normal routine of seeing our own cows and assessing the herd against what is being observed in other herds. This is the advantage of having a periodic assessment performed by an Accredited Body Condition Scorer.

Here are five benefits of hitting BCS targets for the late lactation/drying-off period (and five reasons why a second pair of "accredited" eyes is a good idea):

- ✓ Timing of drying off can be timed more accurately against feed availability (which seems to be see-sawing this summer) and current BCS
- ✓ If late season change to once-a-day milking is contemplated, this process can be fine tuned
- ✓ Cows will be better set up to successfully navigate the transition period
- ✓ Cows will be, potentially, better set up to minimize BCS losses into the early lactation period
- ✓ Cows are likely to have better reproduction and production outcomes if set up well for body condition through the dry period



Take some simple measures, take action!

By John Penry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian & Researcher

In the past three months, a number of farms have initiated a milk quality investigation with members of our veterinary mastitis investigation team. At first glance, this may not seem surprising, but what is notable is that the majority of these investigations were not “grade busts”. Instead, farms have been initiating milk quality work with our vets because they were dissatisfied with their level of clinical mastitis cases, or BTSCC, or both. They recognised the opportunity for improvement, and additional farm profit, and took action. It is worth taking a moment to discuss the “triggers for action” that spurred these farm teams into an investigation and, ultimately, an action plan.

Any milking herd in the world can have their mastitis situation described in simple terms. **An individual cow, or more specifically her four quarters, are either uninfected or infected.**

For the uninfected group:

- milk from all quarters will not grow mastitis causing bacteria
- the individual cow cell count (ICCC) is low – below 150,000 cells/ml.

The majority of infected cows will be subclinically infected

- no visible changes are seen in the milk
- mastitis bacteria are present
- the ICCC is elevated.

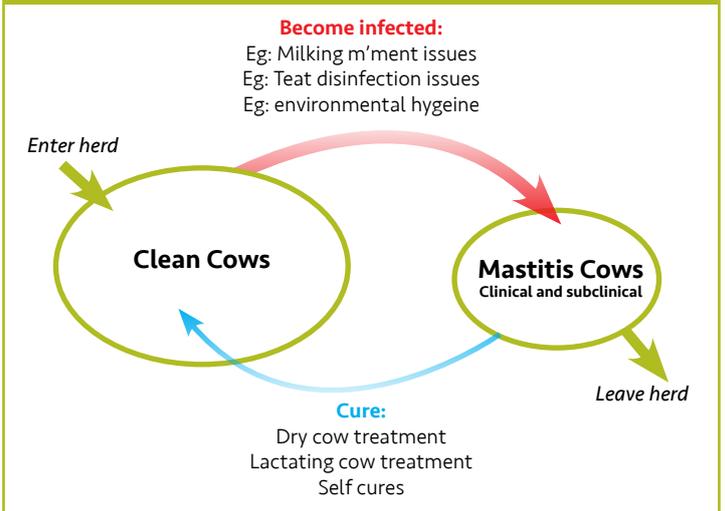
The infected group in the herd may also include some clinically infected cows periodically.

There can be opportunities for cows to leave the uninfected group and become infected (new infections). There are also, more limited opportunities for cows to re-enter the uninfected group, via lactating cow or dry cow treatment and hence become a cure.

The herd mastitis dynamics, as just described, can be visually represented in the above diagram. The red “become infected” arrow is larger than the blue “cure” arrow as there are more risk factors to control that potentially lead to new infections.

Measures that are being taken on farm every vat pickup, or every month, can tell you a lot about where your herd is positioned in its own “mastitis dynamics” chart.

Herd mastitis dynamics chart showing changes over a single season



For example, the BTSCC, gives us a pretty direct measure of approximately what proportion of the herd is sitting in either the Uninfected or Infected groups. The number of clinical mastitis cases, per 100 cows, per month, tells us a lot about the size of the “become infected” arrow in a herd. During the lactation, beyond the first 14 days in milk, **if the case rate is over 1/100 cows/mth this can be a trigger to indicate that the new mastitis infections** are greater than desired and investigation is warranted. The number of clinical cases in heifers warrants special attention as, typically, these animals enter the milking herd in the uninfected group.

Finally, for herds that are enrolled in herd testing, the change in ICCC between herd test periods, particularly for first lactation heifers, gives an accurate estimate of the new infection rate in the herd over a period of months. For example, a between herd test, new infection rate of 10% or greater would be a trigger for action.

For all herds, even if you are not herd testing, information is at hand to tell you what your individual herd mastitis dynamics looks like. These are straight forward measures to assess (with the help of your Vet team). If you think improvement is possible, or desirable, **take action to reduce the costs of clinical mastitis**, subclinical infection and elevated BTSCC.



Caring for young stock

By Michael Shallcross, Veterinarian, Anexa

Your calves will hopefully be pushing 200kg by now, and while oral drenching is becoming more difficult, parasite control is still important, especially with the recent warm wet weather. You should still be drenching calves monthly, and if you are using a pour-on make sure it's a dual active like Eclipse or Boss.

Weather that's good for growing worms is also good for growing fungal spores. Spore counts are climbing now, so make sure you've got your zinc sorted. By far the best solution for calves is to zinc bolus them, as other methods are either too difficult or less effective.

Correction

In the February edition of Dairy Talk we made a mistake in the maths presented on working out the recommended milking liner life in days. Our apologies – always check the calculator twice! The correct method for the example given should have been:

- Cows milked per AM and PM milking session = 240
- Units in the shed = 16
- Cows milked per unit, per milking session = $240/16 = 15$ (rounded)
- Cows milked per unit, per day = $15 \times 2 = 30$ (AM and PM milking)
- No of days of recommended liner life = $2500/30 = 83$ days (3 months approximately)

This assumes that the recommended liner life, as stated by the manufacturer, is 2500 cow milkings. While this is typical of most liners available in New Zealand, always check the packaging for the individual liner recommendation.

GoodYarn

ENABLING FARMING COMMUNITIES TO TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Anexa FVC is proud to get on board with the “GoodYarn” program developed by DairyNZ and Wellsouth (a primary health organisation).

GoodYarn is a workshop which helps rural professionals and farmers to understand the issues surrounding mental health and wellness. Participants are given tips on how to stay healthy, recognise stress in others and respond effectively.

Anexa FVC has trained four of its staff as facilitators of the program, and all staff will be attending the workshop over the next year to enable them to understand mental health issues and be equipped to have a conversation with a fellow staff member, a farmer client or anyone else they are concerned about.

We are proud to be able to support such a great initiative for the benefit of our rural community and our employees.



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