

NOVEMBER 2015 | NEWSLETTER



TOP TIP:

Early scanning - In a season with low payout it may seem counter intuitive to consider this option but given the value of the information gathered it makes great economic sense. Want to know more? See page 3.

Articles:

So how is your mating going?

Bovine Digital Dermatitis (BDD)

Early scan – when and why would you bother?

Behind the scenes – Scanning with Geoff Plant

Interpreting Bulk Milk BVD results



So how is your mating going?

By Katrina Roberts, Herd+Plus Veterinarian

Interpreting your Return Interval Analysis (RIA) and Non-Return Rate (NRR) in combination with your three week submission rates, can give you early information about how mating is going.

Reviewing this data as early as possible (during week four of AB) enables you to make changes in order to improve the rest of the mating period (number of bulls, date the bulls go in, AB changes, total mating length) to minimise the impact of any issues during the early mating period.

Firstly you need to find this information. Here's how:

Interpreting Non-Return Rate (NRR) and Return Interval Analysis (RIA)

If you are a Minda user, you can find the NRR and RIA reports on MINDAPRO under reproductive analyses, or on Mindaweb on the Reproduction tab.

If you are an Insight user you will also be able to find similar reports on the online version of Insight.

Understanding the terminology:

NRR is a proxy for conception rate. The NRR is influenced by a number of factors, and unfortunately you cannot always get excited about a high NRR.

Reasons for a high (>70%) NRR include:

- A high conception rate i.e. lots of cows holding to the first service.
- Poor heat detection of the returns (heat detection fatigue can kick in at around week four of mating so often the returns are not picked up) and/or there is poor recording of the returns.
- An abnormally high number of early embryonic deaths i.e. cows are pregnant initially but then lose the embryo.
- A high occurrence of phantom cows – non-cycling cows have a higher chance of being phantom cows. Cows that are mated and then don't return despite not being pregnant i.e. they become anoestrous that is they are pretending to be pregnant (hence phantom).

Your herds' NRR may be 10-20% higher than your actual first service conception rate due to the above factors.

If your AB period is less than four weeks, or your total number of returns is less than 50, the NRR and RIA is not reliable.

Reasons for short returns include:

- First heat since calving i.e. if there is a high percentage of later calving cows in your herd then you will see a higher percentage of short returns.
- Non-cycling cows - return intervals following a non-cycling programme can be more variable than in cycling cows, therefore if a high percentage of non-cyclers were treated, this will influence the spread of return lengths.
- Enthusiastic heat detection - often cows will partially join with the sexually active group (SAG) a few days before their true heat, which is due to the high concentrations of oestrogen being secreted from the dominant follicle. These cows will exhibit a normal heat when the follicle actually ovulates. Therefore having some of these is normal, and having no short returns suggests that the heat detection is perhaps missing heats.
- Unsure heat detection – if the heat detector is unsure of the true signs of cows being on heat then the RIA pattern is erratic i.e. almost equal numbers of short, normal and long returns.

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So how is your mating going? Continued...

The RIA is very useful for understanding the heat detection accuracy in your herd. The graph below shows the percentage of returns by interval.

This graph shape will change as the number of returns recorded increases, as mating progresses i.e. there will be fewer long returns, if the report is generated at week four of mating compared to week seven.

The key features of the graph are the peak of returns falling within the 'normal range', which is 18-24d, with a smaller peak occurring around 2-7d or 8-12d. A small percentage (target <13%) of short returns are normal.

If you have any questions regarding interpretation of these reports speak to one of our InCalf-trained vets.



Bovine Digital Dermatitis (BDD)

By Rachel Hamill, Anexa FVC Morrinsville Veterinarian

BDD is a relatively new disease of the feet of cattle, with multiple cases emerging in dairy herds across New Zealand. BDD is a highly contagious disease that you should be aware of and be able to recognise to prevent it becoming widespread in your herd.

BDD causes pain in the interdigital space and above the heel bulbs. While it is thought that individual cases may have been present in New Zealand since the 1980s, the disease appears to now be changing and spreading, and we are starting to see many more cases in new herds across New Zealand.

BDD is so contagious that a single diseased foot has the potential to infect a whole clean herd.

What do the lesions look like?

BDD goes through several stages in its appearance. Most commonly the skin in the area above the heel bulbs or between the claws is affected. Early on the lesion is round to oval, moist and mottled grey in appearance. When the area is cleaned up, the tissue looks red and raw, and is prone to bleeding ("strawberry footrot"). It has a foul odour and is very painful and the cow will lift her foot if you touch it or spray it with a high pressure hose. However, usually there is no swelling in the foot, and at this stage, lameness can be minimal. Older lesions start to look like warty growths with matted hair growing from the base ("hairy heel warts"). The disease can progress to under-running of the sole, erosion of the heels, and ultimately lameness can be quite severe.



Diagnosis

If you suspect you have a case of BDD in your herd, contact your local Anexa FVC vet to take a sample for confirmation. As this is an emerging disease in New Zealand with the potential to become a very serious problem, we are carefully monitoring its spread and would appreciate being made aware of all new cases.

Early scan – when and why would you bother?

By Dave Curnow, Anexa FVC Ngatea Veterinarian

In a season with low payout it may seem counter intuitive to consider this option but given the value of the information gathered it makes great economic sense. This is why more than 50% of our clients already do early scanning.

What is involved?

Your herd will require two scans; one early and one late.

The first scan is booked six to eight weeks after the end of AB.

The timing of this scan is very important. This scan identifies those cows pregnant during the AB period.

The second and final scan involves rechecking only those cows not pregnant at the first scan and is done at least six weeks after bull removal. A herd with a 70% 6-week in calf rate would expect to rescan 20 to 25% of the herd. If you have concerns over a herd with early pregnancy losses then rescanning of the entire herd would be worth considering. The basis for this is fairly straightforward: grazing cost/week x number of weeks dry = cost per cow not in calf (you don't have to find many of these cows to pay for the rescan).

What are the benefits of early scanning?

- ✓ Makes you money
- ✓ Ability to dry off on confirmed calving dates
- ✓ More milk in the vat
- ✓ Set your cows up better for next season
- ✓ Helps plan feed over late lactation
- ✓ Adds value to potential stock sales
- ✓ Good data helps improve herd reproduction
- ✓ Get maximum benefit from the job

If you are interested and would like to know more read on!

Ability to dry off on due calving dates

More milk in the vat = more money

Why dry off a cow in March that isn't calving until September? The difference between feeding a milking and a dry cow is ~ 6kg DM. At 30cents/kg DM this is \$1.80 / day. Also remember that your later calvers will likely be the highest producers in the herd later in the season.



Set your cows up better for next season

- Dry off and manage transition period based on due to calve date.
- Earlier calving cows take longer to eat their daily ration and can't compete with later calving cows at the end of lactation and during the dry period. The end result is earlier calvers tend to be lighter and later calvers often too fat at calving.
- Earlier calvers in low BCS at calving = less production + time to cycle + potentially more animal health issues.
- The "too fat" late calvers are at higher risk for metabolic issues. Even if they have no health problems they have been dry for too long which is a cost of feed you haven't been getting a return on in the vat.

Added value to potential stock sales

- ✓ Cows verified in calf to AB are worth more if you wish to sell them.
- ✓ Knowing late calvers earlier gives you more options.
- ✓ Early culling decisions can be made after the first scan, so you can consider older low producing cows for culling around Christmas time, before the cull cow price drops and the drought arrives.

Allows forward planning of feed budgets over final half of lactation

Work to target dry off based on scan results:

- ✓ Ensures a net financial return on feed related spending.
- ✓ Reduces feeding of expensive (i.e. supplement) feeds to dry cows.

Good data is the basis for incremental improvements in your herd reproduction

Early scanning allows:

- ✓ A detailed report (referred to as a fertility focus report) to be done.
- ✓ You to focus on areas of your biggest potential returns.
- ✓ You to identify areas where you are performing well.

Net results

- ✓ Advice aimed at returning the most "bang for your buck".
- ✓ Impact of management changes can be assessed.
 - For instance, just stating a herd empty rate is of little value unless considered in context e.g. 10% empty. 6 week calving rate 60%. Mating length 14 weeks versus 12% empty. 6 week calving rate 80%. Mating length 9 weeks. Which herd will make you more money?

Value added service (tied to early scanning)

For those herds performing an early scan, Anexa FVC can:

- ✓ Provide a technician to record data directly (Infonet, MINDA, palm pilot) and upload to MINDA. **You can also keep your own records if required.**
- ✓ Prepare a reproduction report which will be discussed with you by your Veterinarian. This report will be standardised so key areas can be identified and benchmarked (anonymously) against local results and industry targets.

If you are interested in this service please contact your Anexa FVC clinic to discuss this with a veterinarian.

Behind the scenes – Scanning

For Geoff Plant, Morrinsville Vet this season will be the 17th year that he has spent his January scanning dairy cows. Anexa has 26 trained pregnancy scanning vets, who receive annual refresher training to ensure accuracy and consistency in dating the foetus. Graduate vets are given the opportunity to buddy up with experienced vets, but do not start scanning until training is completed. Usually this is their 2nd or 3rd year post graduation.

We have a large number of both heads up and traditional scanners, which undergo annual maintenance checks before the busy scanning period begins. The selection of scanner is up to the preference of each vet, as we are confident both systems offer excellent results.

Our service doesn't end when the vet leaves the farm; we have a team who enter the data into MindaPro, allowing your vet to provide a full report of the results.

Geoff, what's a typical day during scanning?

"4:30am starts are common, I head to the farm to get started during milking on rotaries. After the mid-day scanning I occasionally scan during afternoon milking, again only on rotary's."

What is the most satisfying aspect of scanning?

"When we get a great pregnancy rate and the farmer has good news to celebrate. A lot of work goes into getting the herd in calf and it's excellent to see results of this effort. Not to forget a cool beer at the end of a long hot day."



Interpreting Bulk Milk BVD results

A large number of our clients provide us access to their Bulk Milk BVD results, and as the results are coming in at present, the vets are busy contacting clients and assisting in the interpretation of the farms BVD status. We are seeing a range of results, with every farm being different, and therefore each farm has an individual options to consider. *BVD management isn't a case of doing the same thing as the neighbours.*

If you receive your results directly from LIC, please give your vet a call so you can discuss your herd's status.

Coromandel
P: 07 866 8556
Gordonton
P: 07 824 2103

Huntly
P: 07 828 7660
Maramarua
P: 09 232 5891

Matamata
P: 07 888 8068
Morrinsville
P: 07 889 5159

Ngaruawahia
P: 07 824 8630
Ngatea
P: 07 867 7256

Paeroa
P: 07 862 8815
Raglan
P: 07 825 8390

Rototuna
P: 07 853 0027
Te Aroha
P: 07 884 8014

Te Kauwhata
P: 07 826 3581
Thames
P: 07 868 7005

From the Board

On September 30th Anexa FVC held our annual AGM. There were two Board positions for election this year with one Board member standing for re-election.

We appreciated the level of interest from our members in the election process, both with the high calibre of candidates nominated and the level of voting interest.

We thank our outgoing Chairman, Brian Gordon, who after 12 years' service on the Board, including 3 years' as Chairman, has stood down. Deputy-Chairman Bruce Thomas has been elected as Chairman.

"I am looking forward to getting the Board together and working with the practice to achieve both success for our members and maintain the excellent level of service and innovation that Anexa FVC offers".

We welcome Wayne Berry to the Board and congratulate Neil McLean for successful re-election. David Firth has been elected as Deputy-Chairman.

Other Board members are Alister Smith, Neil McLean, Mike Karl and Peter Le Heron.

Drench promo

For further info - Ask your sales rep, or call into your local clinic



- Reminder -

Is your dog up to date with leptovaccines?

Support is available



Free and confidential help is available through the trusts' coordinator.

0800 787 254 | www.rural-support.org.nz

0800 2 THE VET | anexafvc.co.nz