

Monitoring nutrition during mating

By Katrina Roberts, Herd Health Veterinarian, Anexa Vets

The most commonly asked questions we get from now until December are:

- **How do I make sure I am feeding my cows well during the mating period without wasting pasture?**
- **How do I manage the dilemma of managing pasture quality and quantity without impacting In-calf rates?**

Well this is a very long discussion which cannot be solved here, as the decisions made on each farm are quite farm specific (NB: think that sounds like a non-committal consultant's answer if I ever heard one!). However, here we will aim to give you some tips around making informed decisions with respect to feeding during the mating period.

In-calf recommends that the overall nutritional aim for the herd during mating **is cows maintain or gain BCS from the commencement of mating**. However, small changes in BCS are hard to measure (even with whole herd BCS monthly). Once you have measured a loss in BCS during the mating period it is likely some negative impact on submission and conception rates has occurred, and it will take some time to turn the cows around. From our experience and data (from hundreds of herds BCSed at Anexa FVC over the past few years) we also know that the young cow mob pretty much doesn't gain BCS during mating, the best they do is hold!

If you use liveweight monitoring you will be able to use the average weekly weight trends to monitor groups of cows (heifers for example), ensuring they are gaining weight slowly during the mating period. If they are losing weight, you are in a position to be able to take early action (separate into their own mob, change the feeding amount/type, milk OAD). If you need help making use of your liveweight data please talk to your vet.

As well as your pasture and any supplement measurements, your daily bulk tank parameters are the best way to monitor your herd's nutritional status during the mating period. Most of the milk companies have great phone Apps to make checking in on your bulk tank trends very simple, but the key is deciphering this information!



Daily variation in protein and fat % is normal when cows are eating a diet that is in the majority (>50%) pasture. The pasture composition will vary (species, time since last grazing, palatability); the exact amount consumed will vary; and cow maintenance will vary with walking distances, contour of the paddock, and climatic conditions. Therefore, daily variations are not good indications of how well cows are fed. In-calf recommends using a 10 day average protein % and fat % to monitor your herd performance.

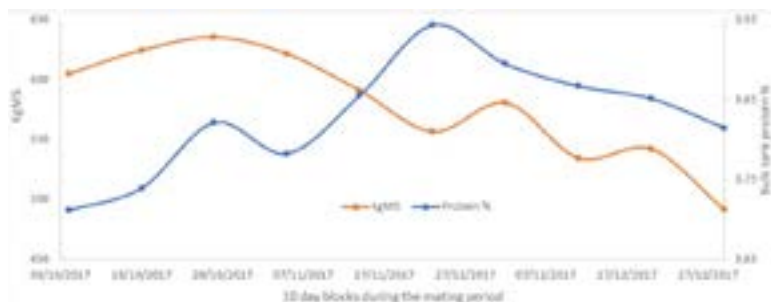
You cannot compare your bulk tank milk protein and fat % with your neighbours or with your old share-milking job. Most of the time the absolute figures are less important than the changes over time.

Milk protein % is an indicator of cow energy status. The higher the milk protein, the higher the energy status. NZ and overseas research has shown that milk protein % is positively related to in-calf rates. That is within herds cows with a higher milk protein % have on average better in-calf rates than cows with lower milk protein %. There is a normal decline in milk protein % in early lactation, which you will see in the bulk tank measurements, however once the herd has hit peak production, you should see a slow but steady average increase in 10 day milk protein %. From your Planned Start of Mating (PSM) until the end of mating you will want a slow but steady increase in your bulk tank protein %, indicating a positive energy balance.

If your cows and calving pattern are consistent, **bulk tank protein % is reasonably comparable between seasons.** Therefore, when looking at your bulk tank protein %, you want to compare the previous 10 day period (is it higher or lower), and the same period last year (is it higher or lower). A drop of more than 0.2% requires

action. This may include; reviewing your grazing management; looking at the supplements being offered; interpreting the other bulk tank parameters (has milk fat % increased, has production dropped or has milk urea dropped?)

Consider the example (graphed below) where we are tracking 10 day protein % (blue) and kgMS (orange) over the mating period (PSM early October) until the end of mating (Early December).



Protein % increases over the first 8 weeks of mating from 3.7 to 3.9 %. The slight blip in late October is too small to be of any concern. However, from early December onwards the protein % slowly decreases, only 0.1% over 3-4 weeks, but a change in pattern. The protein test trend, when considered with the milk production trend (cows held production until mid-late November and then declined through late November/December) suggests that energy intakes from Early December dropped, and cows were possibly losing BCS during this period. For those that remember last December, the average temperature for the month was 2°C above normal and the second warmest December on record (NIWA)! Therefore, these unusually high temperatures most likely had a negative impact on pasture quality and cow intakes. The herd in the example starts and finishes mating early, and has an above average 6 week in-calf rate, therefore, the majority of the cows were in calf by the time the energy intakes dropped, and there was minimal impact of this feed pinch on the final not in calf rate.

For a herd that has less cows pregnant at the time of a feed pinch (quality or quantity), there is potentially a bigger impact i.e. the cows that are not in calf are the ones that will potentially stop cycling and/or have reduced conception rates.

Most of our Fonterra clients have given their Anexa Vets 3rd party access to their bulk tank data. This means that we can help you monitor your energy status during the mating period. If you are an OCD or Tatura supplier we can also sort out 3rd party access. So, if you would like us to help you keep your herd on track during mating, or help deciphering the data, please get in touch.

IMPORTANT

New animal welfare rules

As of 1 October 2018 there have been new animal welfare regulations implemented. At this time of year, it is tempting to just send those last few cows that don't seem to be pregnant away. Just be aware that Regulation 41 restricts the transportation of late pregnant animals and has fines for those that do not comply.

A summary of the latest changes can be found at:


<https://bit.ly/2v8OpnM>

The complete codes of welfare can be found at:

<https://bit.ly/1X87jFT>

If you have further questions, ask your Vet, we are here to help.



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Treating mastitis with Metacam®

Many cases of clinical mastitis resolve by themselves. Clinical mastitis is generally caused by bacterial infection. However, by the time of diagnosis, and over the next few days, a proportion of mastitis cases self-cure. Treatment of clinical cases of mastitis with a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (e.g. Metacam) increases bacteriological cure rate over antibiotics alone. We aim to test whether treatment of mild clinical mastitis cases (i.e. those where there is no evidence that the cow is systemically ill) with Metacam alone, results in better outcomes than placebo treatment.

Cows will be eligible if diagnosed with mastitis for the first time in the current lactation, have only 1 gland effected, do not have severe teat end damage, and that have not been treated with antibiotics or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories in the 14 days before diagnosis. Any cow with severe mastitis, that is, any signs that the cow herself is systemically affected (depressed, dehydrated, not eating etc.) will be excluded.

Please ring 0800 627 840 if you have a suitable case and a technician will come to farm to collect a milk sample and apply the treatment. The treatment will be a standard dose of Metacam (i.e. injection of 2.5 mL/100 kg live weight) or injection of a similar volume of the placebo. The milk withhold is 84 hours (3.5 days), and the meat withhold is 10 days. At 14 (+/-3) days and 21 (+/- 3) days after treatment, a technician will come and collect milk samples again. Cows will be monitored for at least 100 days post treatment, by downloading electronic farm records and/or recovering on-farm paper records.

We will pay for the treatments, credit your vet account by \$50 per cow that completes the project, and provide the microbiology results (worth about \$15/cow).

If you have a potentially suitable case, please ring 0800 627 840 (at any time) or for more general questions contact Scott McDougall on 021 800 341 or via email at smcdougall@anexafvc.co.nz

How to find and fix lame cows

By Hanneke Officer, Health Hoof Provider and Veterinarian

It's not necessarily easy. Yes, a hobbling cow is quite obvious, but can you pick up subtle gait changes indicating early lameness? And if so, can you correctly identify the cause and fix it?

These and more lameness learnings will be discussed at our lameness workshop:

- Why does it feel like there's more lameness following rainfall?
- When do antibiotics successfully cure lameness and when do they not?
- What are the most common causes and how do I identify and treat them?
- We don't have a cow crush – what are my options for restraint?
- I'm not confident with a hoof knife – how do I know how far to go and what damage I can do?
- What can I do to prevent lameness?
- I think I know what causes lameness on my farm, but I'm not sure what to do fix it – who can help and what will this cost?

On top of this, we want to make sure you leave this workshop with as much confidence as possible to tackle lameness on your farm. Think about specific risk factors on your farm and be prepared to ask questions to get the most out of this day.

Sign up for our workshop now, spaces are limited.

LAMENESS FARMER WORKSHOP

When: Friday 26th October
10.00am - 1.00pm

Where: Anexa Vets Morrinsville,
25 Moorhouse Street, Morrinsville

RSVP: www.anexafvc.co.nz/events

NUMBERS ARE LIMITED, RSVP NOW



Workshop presented by Hanneke Officer

Veterinarian and Healthy Hoof Provider



Use milk samples as an insurance policy

By John Penry, Veterinarian and Researcher, Anexa Vets

Every herd will experience clinical mastitis cases, particularly during the first third of lactation. They are obviously something we can do without, but even in herds with excellent environment and milking management, some level of clinical mastitis will be seen. When a cow is detected with a clinical case and treatment is started, some actions around administration are recommended in 100% of cases. One of those actions is cleaning and disinfection of the teat-end just prior to the lactating cow tube being inserted and the drug dose administered. This cleaning and disinfection step (with 70% meths or disinfectant teat wipes) significantly reduces the risk of a new bacteria being introduced into the quarter through the act of inserting the tube nozzle.

Given this disinfection step is happening it makes sense to use this process for the maximum benefit and this is where the idea of taking a milk sample as "insurance" fits in. Once the teat end is disinfected, it only takes an additional minute to obtain a milk sample from the affected quarter immediately prior to inserting the treatment tube. This milk sample is not being used to guide treatment in this specific case, but rather to create a bank of milk samples that can be submitted for culture (bacteriology) should the new clinical case rate increase or pass the trigger point for action. If the farm does find that their clinical mastitis rate increases, knowledge of the dominant bacteria is pivotal in creating a prevention plan. While it is predicted that many cases will be *Strep uberis*, this should not be just assumed. Having a store of milk samples from clinical cases, representing the cases from say the previous six weeks buys you time and an advantage should an action plan be needed.

So what are the specific steps required with these samples? Firstly, samples should be recorded with the cow ID, date and quarter. Secondly, samples should be frozen as soon as practical after milking – these frozen samples can be stored for three to four months without sample degradation. If, three months into the lactation, the clinical case rate is at an acceptable level, it is straightforward to throw out the first month of samples and just retain the last two months. Alternatively, if there is ample freezer space, samples can just be kept for the season and submitted based on sample age if the need arises. Even if you get to the end of the season and decide that no samples need to be submitted, by keeping frozen clinical mastitis samples all you have done is use up a little additional time at treatment insertion and used up a few tubes while maintaining an "insurance" for creating a mastitis action plan should the need arise. It is a great "belt and braces" approach to mitigating mastitis risk on any farm.

Hoof maintenance can help

Lame cows with visible claw lesions are half as likely to conceive as unaffected cows and take on average 40 days longer to get in calf.

Hoof trimming is like a pedicure for cows in that it restores the natural shape, balance and weight bearing surface of the claws. This takes them back to a foot shape as if she were a fresh calved heifer. Hoof trimming is an effective preventative process to help lower the risk of lameness.

Stuart Rogers from Hoof-IT has partnered with our Anexa Vets business to provide this service to help prevent lameness. With mating upon us, and added stress to claws, it is imperative cows are free of hoof discomfort. Feedback from clients so far has shown Stuart to be thorough, experienced, highly efficient and well-equipped. Call Rhonda at the Anexa FVC Gordonton clinic to book Stuart in for your herd.

HOOF-IT
WAIKATO HOOF TRIMMING

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- ✓ Quality trim
- ✓ Good service
- ✓ Vet referred

Book your herd's hoof trimming now

Phone Rhonda on 027 886 5621 or
email anexa.services@anexafvc.co.nz

anexafvc.co.nz/farm-services



Quiz night

We had a fantastic turn out at our pre-mating member events. Over 200 farmers attended the 2 quiz nights and the farm staff training held in September.

Some of the snippets of information gleaned during the sessions included

- A baby gorilla is called an infant!
- Having a board member on your quiz team in the Hauraki area increases your chances of being on a winning team, but not in Morrinsville!
- Farmers are exceptionally good at making cow reproductive tracts out of play dough and the quote of the night goes to JP "who would have thought that play dough could make such good sperm?"
- Competition is alive and well in our farming clientele – lets hope this competitive energy is carried into the mating period, and you all are competing for the Anexa FVC Repro award for 2018!
- If you haven't ordered your new In calf book do it now!
<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/publications/animal/the-in-calf-book>
- Everyone loves a good prize – the socks have to be the most sought after giveaway we've had!
- Everyone loves the Quiz master's struggling with the pronunciation of words and names, trying to catch them out on an incorrect answer AND ending the evening in uncontrollable laughter!

If you didn't make it this year due to some extreme event that prevented your attendance (I know one farmer had the bad luck of a down cow with a twisted uterus right on start time – needless to say he never made it!), make sure you get your table organised for next year's event!



IT PAYS TO BELONG
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Member Events

Look out for your voting papers in your mail box. Choose up to two candidates to represent you and post your voting paper back early.

Voting closes 5pm Friday 24th October.
Late votes will not be counted.

Notice of the 79th Annual General Meeting

Animal Health Centre Waikato Incorporated AGM will be held: **Wednesday 31st October 2018 commencing at 11.30am in the David Gray Seminar Room, Anexa FVC, 25 Moorhouse Street, Morrinsville**



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