



Avoid Letting Your Calving Pattern Slide

By Steve Harkness, Veterinarian, Anexa Gordonton

Days in milk is one of the biggest drivers of production and a tight calving pattern is one of the key influencers of your reproductive performance. **Can you afford to let your calving pattern slide?**

The first step is identifying whether non-cyclers are going to damage your submission rate. In order to identify the non-cycler group, we recommend tail painting cows five weeks before the planned start of mating (PSM). This gives us enough time for a complete cycle plus time to initiate treatment before the start of mating if required. Cows are suitable for non cycling treatment once they have been calved for just three weeks.

We recommend if less than 15% of the herd are not cycling 10 days before PSM, you should achieve a 95% submission rate without intervention.

Treating non-cyclers is treating a herd problem (low submission rate) by synchronising a group of cows (non-cyclers). These cows are not cycling because they calved late, were below optimal BCS at calving, were poorly grown as heifers, had mineral deficiencies, lost excessive condition score after calving etc. There is only a small chance that genetics are contributing to the problem and that is mostly to do with the breed of the cow i.e. Friesians are more likely than cross breeds to be non-cycling.

The second step is identifying the best method to deal with your non-cyclers.

Our Vets can step through a return on investment calculator with you. This is based on trials in this area and can be modified to reflect the conditions on your farm. It covers different treatment options and timing of treatments.

CIDR programmes are nine days in length and treating cows nine days before the PSM will give you the best return on your investment. Cows starting treatment before the start of mating will on average calve 16 days earlier than if they had no CIDR. This advantage is increased by a further three days when the optional extra eCG injection (fertility enhancement) is added to the program. Also extra AB calves are born the following year and treated cows are less likely to be non-cyclers the following season.

PG or 'why wait' synchrony is used in many herds to 'short cycle' cows. This form of synchrony is only useful in cycling animals and is relatively cheap.

There are also other options for encouraging cycling in non-cycling cows. A commonly used option is Once A Day milking (OAD). However, research shows that cows that are on OAD for 4 weeks from 7 days before the PSM until the end of week 3 of mating had no improvement in conception rate and an increase in 3 week submission rate of only 11%. Moreover, the milk production loss in this group would not cover the response. OAD milking from earlier in the season will produce a better response. Therefore, the decision to manage your non-cyclers in this way needs to be an overall farm systems decision.

Several trials have looked at whether running bulls with the non-cyclers will get them bulling any quicker. The results show there is no improvement in cycling, but bulls can detect bulling cows better than some farmers.

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Maximising Bull Fertility and Reproduction

By Michael Shallcrass, Veterinarian, Anexa FVC Gordonton

Mating time is just around the corner, and these days, with shorter mating periods, it is vital that your natural mating goes as well as your AB period. For most farmers the bull mating period has been reduced to four or five weeks, which means that cows not yet pregnant at the end of AB may only get one chance with the bull before the end of mating. It is therefore vital that you plan and execute your bull mating period as well as possible.

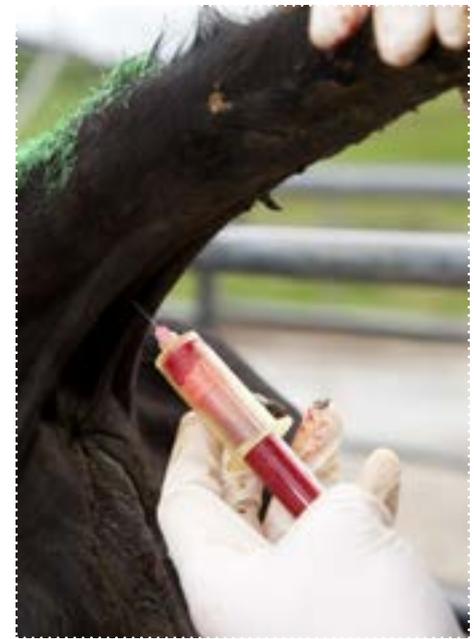
Bulls should come from a reputable source and arrive on farm several weeks before they start work to give them time to settle in and any issues to become apparent. Insist on bulls that have been BVD tested and vaccinated, and in an ideal world they should also be vaccinated against leptospirosis and blackleg.

If a bull gets lame he won't work as hard, and if he gets sick or has a temperature his sperm quality will drop. It takes up to 60 days for new healthy sperm to be produced and you don't have time for that, so any bull with any problem needs to be replaced as soon as possible. It is more work, but consider training bulls to stay in the paddock or not come onto the yard as a way of reducing lameness.

Bull power is another thing that needs to be considered. With an eight or ten week bull mating period the length of mating could compensate for low bull numbers, but with shorter mating periods this is no longer the case. For the average 300 cow herd with average performance, you should have six bulls in with the herd at any one time (usually two teams of three). There should also be an equal number of spare bulls, so they can be regularly rotated to keep them keen. This means that there should be at least 12 bulls on farm from about the middle of October through to around Christmas time.

We know that bulls are a pain and that they fight and dig holes and break fences, but if you have enough bulls and manage them well, then you can see a big improvement in your conception rates over that period.

Repro Ready consults are happening right now. This is an excellent time to discuss your bull management and get a plan in place well in advance.



Making Sure the Girls are ready for Mating

A simple blood test from 8 to 10 representative animals can quickly tell us important information about your herd. Getting the cow's overall health right is key to maximising conception rates; how can she create a calf when her own demands aren't being met? Now is the time to check your herd's health status, so that any problems can be rectified in time for mating. Copper, Selenium, B12, Magnesium, and Calcium are all important for conception, yet deficiencies are common. Ketones indicate that a cow is burning stored fat, alerting us to problems with energy intake. Subclinical mineral deficiencies and subclinical ketosis will affect conception rates too; you may not be able to spot any outward signs that anything is wrong, but internally, the body is not ready for pregnancy. To avoid this, book your spring blood sampling in today - healthy cows lead to healthy conception rates.

It's almost mating time for animals born in 2015 - what can you do to maximise their reproductive performance?

The most significant factor is body weight; **heifers that reach their body weight targets are going to perform better.** Animals that fail to reach targets are less likely to have reached puberty before the start of mating, and so are going to calve later or fail to get pregnant. Young stock should be monitored regularly to ensure they are growing well and if a problem is identified, management changes need to take place quickly to stop them slipping further behind.

Make sure they're drenched pre-mating and have had sufficient Copper and Selenium supplementation, as trace element deficiencies will also negatively impact on growth and reproductive performance.

Mastitis News

By Hamish Clare, Veterinarian, Anexa FVC Morrinsville

With most places experiencing significantly more wet weather this winter and early spring compared to last season, a lot of farmers have had more environmental mastitis over the dry period and through calving. At a local monitoring station in North Waikato the rainfall for June 2016 was triple that of 2015 and close to double for July!

This has left some farmers battling erratic and higher than usual bulk somatic cell counts (BMSCCs). Checking the filter after the milking mob are through and before the colostrum cows are cupped is a simple way to check for clinical mastitis in the milkers when mastitis risk is high. Also making sure emollient concentrations are adequate in those muddy conditions. Extra emollient may be added to bring the concentration in the final mix to a maximum of 15% for short periods (1-2 weeks).

If your BMSCC is still sitting over 250,000, you should take steps now to reduce and control this. This is especially important if you plan to go to once a day milking (OAD) later in the season or if you are pursuing low BMSCC incentives. Early intervention is more likely to be cost effective with the majority of the season left to reap any benefits and reducing further spread of infection in the herd.

With improving conditions in late August, the situation looks brighter. The emphasis begins to switch from environmental causes of mastitis to contagious causes. Cows will be more likely to pick up infections leading to mastitis from bacteria on their skin/teats, other cows, the people milking them and from the milking machine rather than from exposure to mud. Bacteria responsible for such infections include the well-known *Staph. aureus*, often referred to as just 'Staph'. *Staph. aureus* can cause long standing subclinical infections giving cows high somatic cell counts (HSCCs), it is very contagious and can be very difficult to treat with resistance to penicillin common and cure rates as low as 25%.



Some simple ways to reduce the spread of mastitis infection in your herd are:

- ✓ **Teat spray every teat after every milking.** Teat spraying after milking reduces new infections due to cow-associated bacteria such as *Staph. aureus* by 50% and is also important in reducing *Strep. uberis* infections. It is one of the most effective somatic cell count and mastitis control measures available, but it only works if done thoroughly. It is not something you should consider cutting to reduce costs.
- ✓ **Treat cracked or damaged teats.** Bacteria live in cracked or damaged skin, whether this is the cow's teats or milker's hands. Emollients help soften and condition the teat skin and bacterial ointments are available for more severe blackspot lesions.
- ✓ **Milk mastitis and HSCC cows last.** Bacteria in milk from infected quarters may contaminate the skin of the teats of other cows during milking. After a liner has milked an infected quarter, bacteria may be transferred to the next five to six cows milked with that cup.
- ✓ **Wear gloves and clean your hands often.** If milk from infected quarters gets on your hands this is another potential source of infection so this is particularly important when stripping or RMT testing cows regularly. Gloves, while not always popular, offer a marked improvement over bare hands. Bacteria cannot colonise the skin and gloves can generally be rinsed clean quickly. It has been shown that potentially harmful bacteria can be found on milker's hands for up to 10 days after contact.
- ✓ **Machine and rubberware** related performance are also important as they have a huge influence not only on milking speed but teat condition and mastitis risk. If there are issues these will become more apparent over the next couple of months with cows being exposed to the machine for more milkings and as peak production approaches cups are on for longer.
- ✓ **Take pre-treatment milk samples.** Take a sterile milk sample and store in the freezer prior to treatment. This gives you the option to submit the sample later if the cow doesn't respond or if you have an increased number of clinical cases. Knowing the cause of mastitis allows your vet to make the best treatment recommendations. Results are typically back within 48 hours from arrival at the Morrinsville Laboratory. You can pick up sterile containers from your local clinic.

If you are having problems or need advice, contact your local vet. We also have a number of Vets with further training in mastitis that can help.

Flora, fauna, farmers – factors

Or nutrition, cows, people – races, yard, mud! All these factors (and more) can have an impact on the prevalence of lameness in your herd. Interestingly though, early results from the client lameness survey indicate three risk factors dominated your thoughts; track/races, stones and the weather.

Heading into mating, we would like to remind you of several tips to minimise the impact of these risk factors:

1. A cow naturally places her back feet in exactly the same spot as her front feet; as long as she can see where she's placing her front feet and has time to do so she can avoid problem areas and stones.
2. Trying to rush the tail end of the herd along the track has no impact on the cows leading the herd. Prevent them from turning back, but leave them free to walk to the shed.
3. Cows are creatures of habit; establish a routine of bringing them in, yarding and milking and you'll notice an improvement in cow flow (and therefore less pressure) within a week.
4. If rain has a significant impact on your races, there are track adjustments that can be made to reduce this issue.
5. Heads up means pressure, whether you see this along the track or on the yard. Improving cow flow (see point 3) and standardising gate use (top gate and backing gate) addresses this problem.
6. Make sure to hose the yard down between milkings; stones on the yard can cause significant lameness problems quickly.

If these tips have started you thinking, but you would like some help putting them into practice, ring your clinic to make an appointment with a Healthy Hoof Provider.

Prevention is so much better than treating lame cows and knowledge is the key to prevention; we've got plenty and we'd love to share with you to help maximise production and mating success through lameness reduction.

It is also worth being reminded that although every herd in the Waikato was exposed to the same climatic conditions in July, not every herd has lots of lame cows!



Book your calf disbudding!

Contact your local clinic or visit www.anexafvc.co.nz/disbudding

Spring Hours

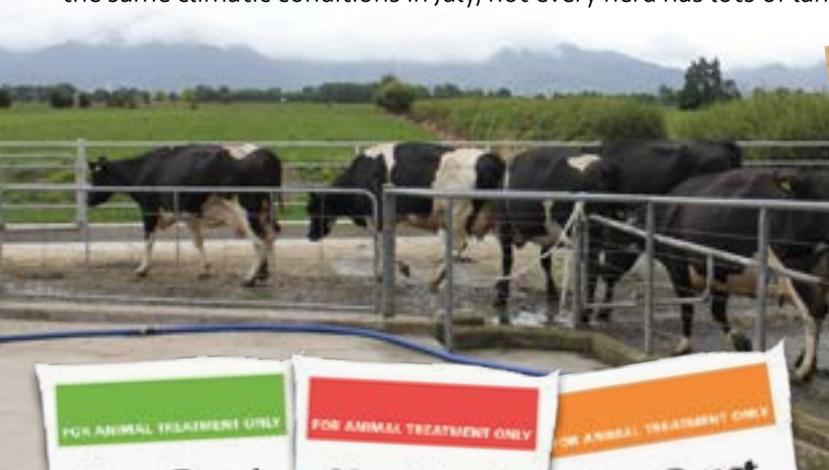
NGATEA

Starting Saturday 2nd July
10 am – 12 pm

GORDONTON

Starting Saturday 16th July
10 am – 1 pm

Please note no vet is at the clinic
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