



How tight is your calving pattern?

By Steve Harkness, Veterinarian, Anexa FVC 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?

Submission rate is the biggest driver of your reproductive performance, therefore focussing on hitting a 90% 3-week submission rate is not negotiable if you want to achieve good performance. The national average 3-week submission rate is only 80% which goes a long way to explaining why we are not hitting the national targets for reproductive performance. All herds that ARE hitting the target have achieved a 3-week submission rate of at least 90%.

Non-cyclers are one of the biggest causes of poor submission rates.

STEP 1: Therefore, the first step is identifying whether non-cyclers are going to reduce your submission rate. To do this we need to know how many you have. 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 that if 85% of whole herd (including late calvers) has cycled before PSM then the herd is on track to achieve at least a 90% submission rate without any intervention. However, if you have not reached this target, then the only option to improve your submission rate is to treat the non-cyclers.

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 crossbreds to be non-cycling.



STEP 2: 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, on average, by a further three days when the optional extra eCG injection (fertility enhancement) is added to the program. Typically, extra AB calves are born the following year and treated cows are less likely to be non-cyclers the following season.

There are limited other options for attempting to encourage the commencement of cycling in non-cycling cows. A commonly used strategy 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 cost of the intervention response. If you want to use OAD to help improve the pre-mating cycling rate in your herd then the strategy needs to be implemented from much earlier in the season, which is well before you know if you have a cycling problem! Therefore, this becomes a bigger farm systems decision, rather than a knee-jerk reaction to a non-cycler problem.

Several trials in dairy cows have looked at whether running bulls with the non-cyclers will get them cycling quicker. The results show no improvement in cycling rate, but as bulls can potentially detect cycling cows better than some people, the strategy may be effective in herd's where the pre-mating cycling rate and submission rate are low due to missed heats.

Catch up with your Vet during September - book your repro ready now.

Premating Checklist

- ✓ Metricheking booked?
- ✓ Repro Ready (mating planning) with your Anexa FVC Vet booked?
- ✓ Tail paint on?
- ✓ Heifer weights in Minda?
- ✓ Minerals in cows and yearlings covered?
- ✓ Bulls ordered and BVD tested and vaccinated?
- ✓ Signed up to www.farmacy.co.nz?
- ✓ Plan for paddocks pugged and damaged?





Maximising Bull Fertility and Reproduction

By Margaret Perry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian Te Aroha

Mating time is just around the corner, and with the new norm of 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 get the bull mating period right.

- ✓ **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 blood tested and double vaccinated.** In an ideal world, they should also be vaccinated against Lepto 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 hard work at first, but consider training bulls to stay in the paddock or not come onto the yard as a way of reducing lameness.
- ✓ **Bull power is a paramount consideration.** With an 8 or 10-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 a typical 300 cow herd, with average reproductive performance, **you should have 6 bulls in with the herd at any one time** (usually 2 teams of 3). 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.



Have your cows had their pre-mating "Warrant of Fitness"?

The time is now! Cows with subclinical trace elements deficiencies have poorer reproductive performance than their healthy counterparts. This makes sense. How can a cow create a new life when she hasn't got enough nutrients and trace minerals to meet her own requirements? Cows that are subclinically low will appear normal to the naked eye, and are only identified by blood testing.

A simple blood sample from 10 cows can tell us if there are gaps in your herd's nutrient profile. Every season is different, and we frequently see herds that have become low in a particular mineral. Most often it is Copper.

Remember, any problems identified need time to be corrected before mating starts, so testing earlier rather than later is advised.

Has your herd passed its Warrant of Fitness? Call Anexa FVC today to book your pre-mating testing.

Don't forget your yearlings. Yearlings, whether they have been kept at home or sent to grazing, mustn't be forgotten. Young animals have not got large stores of Copper in the liver. This means that if they are grazing on soils that are low in Copper, they do not have reserves to fall back on, and frequently become low. Soils high in Sulphur or Molybdenum can exacerbate this as these elements lock soil Copper up lowering absorption. This is an extremely common problem in New Zealand.

Copper boluses can be a great option for this class of stock. Boluses slowly release Copper which can provide your yearlings with a steady source of supplementation throughout the mating period. Selenium and B12 should also be provided, if they are grazing on blocks that have not had selenised fertiliser applied.

Speak to your Vet about the best way to supplement your heifers; wherever they are, we're here to help.

Farmacy.co.nz is gaining momentum – are you signed up and enjoying its many benefits yet?

In the upcoming newsletters we will answer some of your frequently asked questions, this month:

Q. Does the Farmacy Digital Diary meet my requirements in a shed audit?

A. Yep, it sure does! The Farmacy Dairy Diary meets NZCP1 requirements, so you can be confident you are meeting your treatment recording requirements when you have your shed audits.

Record treatments cow side

farmacy+

Member log ins available now, talk with your Vet



Looking after your young stock

This winter has been hard on yearlings. Wet paddocks mean less pasture grown on the young stock block as well as the milking platform. Less Nitrogen has gone on and it has been difficult to feed and utilise supplements for the yearlings. We all know this, but do you know how much this has affected your yearlings?

The only way you can conclusively know this is to weigh them and look at their winter weight gain. How many yearlings have dropped behind target weight? Are they going to make it to 60% of mature live weight at planned start of mating (PSM)? We know for certain that heifers that are not at 60% of mature live weight at PSM are less likely to get pregnant early in the mating period, and then will calve later as heifers. This does not set them up for a long-life in the herd, it means you will be constantly playing catch up with these lighter heifers.

The best time to get them back on track is NOW!

Last season one of the herds we work with identified that there was a definite tail in the yearling mob when weighed in winter. Action was taken immediately and the yearlings were split into two mobs based on weights and previous weight gain i.e. all the heifers that had dropped behind since the previous weighing were put into one mob. The mobs were made equal size to make management easier. The lighter 'at risk' mob was then fed a mix of PKE and Soyahulls in a PKE trailer (3-4kg/animals/day) for the 30-40 days up until PSM. The light group gained 1kg live weight per yearling per day over the time on supplement whereas the 'better mob' that was well fed on all grass grew only at 0.6kg per day.

This meant the lighter heifers had caught up leading into mating, which was the plan.

Take the time to ensure that your replacement stock have adequate mineral supplementation to optimise their growth rates and chance of getting in calf early. Now is the time to check with your grazier.

NEED YOUR STOCK WEIGHED BUT HAVE NO TIME?

Give us a call, we can help. Our technicians can do it for you, phone Rhonda on 027 886 5621



Turning those winter-damaged paddocks into a positive

By Katrina Roberts, Anexa FVC Herd Health Veterinarian

We mentioned last month, that one of the ways to deal with paddocks that have been damaged with pugging in the winter was to crop them in the spring. The reasons for this are paddocks that are damaged will grow less grass due to a reduced number of rye grass plants, and poorer survival of ryegrass through the summer due to lower tiller numbers. The spaces that are created are filled with low value weeds, which in turn compete with the remaining ryegrass. Making sure you are making a well-informed decision not a knee jerk reaction is crucial to the success of a re-grassing programme. The opportunity to invest in new pasture species that are more palatable and maybe better suited to your farm, if done well will lead to increases in farm performance.

Dairy NZ has a pasture assessment guide: <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/59150/Pasture-Condition-Score-Info-Sheet-Nov-2010.pdf> which suggests that paddocks with severe damage can be

- ✓ Sown into summer crop this spring, and plan to sow in perennial pasture in the autumn,
- ✓ Over-sow chicory and fertiliser in the spring or under-sow with chicory in the spring, and plan to renew with a permanent pasture in 6-18 months,
- ✓ Under-sow with Italian ryegrass next autumn, and plan to renew with a permanent pasture following 6-12 months.

Research carried out in Taranaki during the 1980s found that over-sowing and under-sowing ryegrass seed into winter-damaged pastures increased dry matter production by 1-2t/ha in the 2 following years.

Getting your timing right with planting the crops, figuring out which crops will work best for your farm system and what area you need or can manage out of the round while the crops are developing are crucial to the success of the cropping programme. This will then lead to a more profitable outcome on your farm. Summer crops can work well on some farms, however if you have not incorporated them into your farm system before, or you have tried and have been unhappy with the outcome, you need to ensure you have a good plan in place. **Ensure you speak to your farm advisor or one of our advisory team (pictured below) about your options.**



Andy Collier



Katrina Roberts



Margaret Perry



Hamish Clare



Focus on the path to optimal calf weaning

By Rachel Hamill, Anexa FVC Veterinarian Morrinsville

For calves to have a smooth transition from a liquid dominant/milk-based diet to a plant dominant/pasture-based diet, they need to have adequate rumen development. If calves are weaned before their rumen is well developed, they will encounter delays in their growth rates, as they will not be able to properly extract, absorb and utilise the nutrients contained in their feed.



Fig. 1. Milk only.
Penn State Extension

Fig. 2. Milk and hay.
Penn State Extension

Fig. 3. Milk and grain.
Penn State Extension

We aim for a smooth and gradual transition from milk to pasture. High quality meal with 20% crude protein offered to the calves from birth will help to achieve this rumen development. The carbohydrate available in the calf meal drives rumen papillae development and this can be clearly seen in the photos with this article. Weaning calves when they are consuming 1-1.5kg of meal/calf/day will ensure they are prepared to handle a fully pasture-based diet when sent to grazing. Calves fed on milk only, or milk and hay, do not have good to optimal rumen development and will experience a set back at weaning.

Evidence based, best practice recommendations are that calves are weaned based on weights and meal consumption, rather than age. Sub-optimal weaning weight can affect the long-term productivity and survival of cattle. Calves should gain about 0.7kg/day of live-weight over the entire milk feeding period. Your calf weaning weight will depend on the genetic live-weight potential and breed of your herd. Talk to your Vet about the target weaning weight for your calves.

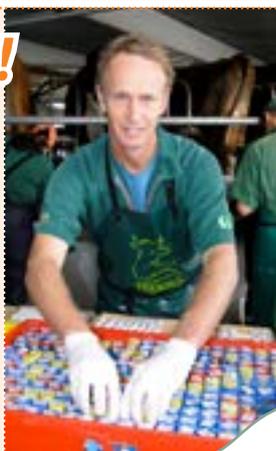


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Congratulations Scott!

Waikato dairy researcher claims prestigious award.

Waikato dairy veterinarian and researcher Dr Scott McDougall has become the first scientist in the Southern Hemisphere to receive a prestigious United States dairying award, the West Agro Inc. Award. The award was created to recognise outstanding research on milk quality and the effects of mastitis, management and milking practices in the production of milk. It is granted by the American Dairy Science Association (ADSA), publishers of the highly regarded scientific journal The Journal of Dairy Science. The award also makes Dr McDougall only the third scientist outside of the United States to ever receive it. Dr McDougall has been a figure in the New Zealand dairying industry for almost 30 years, having spent the past 20 heavily involved in many applied studies and research projects on mastitis and dairy cow reproduction.



Calf BVD Ear-Notching Update

By Matt Peters,
Anexa FVC Veterinarian Rototuna

Our Technicians are doing a great job taking ear-notches for BVD testing while they are disbudding calves. There has been an excellent uptake of this service with significantly more calves tested to date compared to previous years as it's so easy to just add it on to calf disbudding. This ensures your calves are not BVD Pls as early as possible and so won't cause issues in your calf sheds and through the rearing period. It is also a lifetime result. You only need to test once. Once BVD PI negative, always BVD PI negative.

Didn't get around to booking your calves in to be BVD ear-notched at disbudding? No problem, we can do them at any time like when we come out to do their Lepto vaccinations. Just let us know ahead of time so we can bring the required equipment.

Other BVD related tasks to complete before mating:

- ✓ Ensure your bulls are tested and vaccinated for BVD. Insist on receiving a certificate for proof even if you trust your bull breeder or stock agent. This ensures they have been done correctly and at the right time. Any confusion or doubt ask your Vet and do them again. If bulls haven't been tested and vaccinated previously then they will need to be tested and require 2 BVD vaccinations a month apart with the booster a month before the bull is due to go in.
- ✓ Ensure your heifers are BVD vaccinated pre-mating to prevent a disastrous heifer mating. Heifers not previously vaccinated as calves will need 2 BVD vaccinations a month apart with the booster a month before mating. Heifers BVD vaccinated as calves just require a booster a month before mating.
- ✓ Your bulk milk BVD results should be coming through in September and October. This will tell you if there has been a BVD breakdown in your herd which needs investigating before mating starts. Talk to your Vet to ensure yours has been ordered. Ordering through your Vet ensures your Vet will get the results and so can advise you on the best course of action to take at the best time.

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

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P: 07 828 7660
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P: 09 232 5891

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Te Kauwhata
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Thames
P: 07 868 7005

How did your colostrum quality stack up?

Members receive a free colostrum testing at any Anexa FVC clinic. Take the quiz to find out if you are aware of latest recommendations. Circle the answer that fits best with what happens on your farm.

In the first 24hrs of life, I give my calves:

- A) First milking colostrum - From cow or cows calved less than 12 hours
- B) First milking colostrum - From cow or cows calved anytime in the last 24hrs
- C) Pooled colostrum from the "colostrum" mob (cows calved anywhere between 1-4 days)

My calves get their first colostrum feed:

- A) Within 6 hours of birth (multiple pick ups or paddock feeds)
- B) 6-12hrs after birth (twice daily pick up or paddock feeds)
- C) From their mum - I think. If not, then anywhere up to 24 hours old when I pick them up (once daily pick up)

The colostrum I feed to newborns is:

- A) Fed within 24-36 hrs of collection. If not, it is stored frozen or preserved
- B) Fed between 1-4 days after collection, without preservation
- C) Taken from a storage vat or drum that is constantly topped up

My newborn calves receive:

- A) 2L (Jerseys) or 3L (Friesian) of colostrum at their first feed. This is repeated 6 hours later
- B) Lower volume or less frequent feeding than in part A
- C) Depends on whether they look "full" from feeding on mum

My colostrum Quality (antibody concentration) is:

- A) Tested daily with a Brix refractometer
- B) Roughly known to me - I have taken a sample to Anexa FVC and have discussed colostrum quality with my vet
- C) I don't know what my colostrum quality is

Anexa FVC has been testing a sample of your colostrum for free, to open up a discussion around colostrum quality (antibody concentration) and colostrum management. Recent Anexa FVC research has shown 33% of calves in New Zealand are not receiving enough antibodies to protect them from disease, due to poor colostrum quality. Results from this promotion have shown us that a large proportion of farmers are not following or are not aware of latest recommendations regarding colostrum management.



If you have answered:

Mostly A's

Well done! You are following gold standard recommendations for colostrum management and your calves will likely be well protected. Ask your vet to test your calves for antibodies to confirm everything is working.

Mostly B's

Like most farmers in New Zealand, you are following traditional recommendations. Latest research has shown that calves in these management systems may be at risk of FPT (failure of passive transfer or not enough colostrum antibodies). Speak to your vet for more advice.

Mostly C's

Although common, these colostrum practices may be high risk for FPT (failure of passive transfer or not enough colostrum antibodies) in your calves. Consult your vet for individualised advice on how you could reduce the risk of FPT.



Dear Anexa FVC Member,



Re: Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 78th Annual General Meeting of Animal Health Centre Waikato Incorporated be held as per the following details:

Date: Wednesday 27 September 2017

Time: 11.30 am

Venue: David Gray Seminar Room, Anexa FVC, 25 Moorhouse Street, Morrinsville

The agenda is:

- Apologies
- Minutes of the 77th Annual General Meeting held on 28 September 2016
- Appointment of a Reviewer
- Board remuneration
- General business

A light lunch will be held on conclusion of the meeting.

Please RSVP (for catering purposes) by Friday 15th September to Liana Kaye on 07 889 8239, via email anexa.events@anexafvc.co.nz or visit www.anexafvc.co.nz/events to confirm your attendance.

Please note: No nominations were received for either the Elected Director or FVC Director roles therefore Bruce Thomas (Chairman) and Mike Karl (Director) are confirmed on the Board of Directors.

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