

# FESTIVE NEWS – DECEMBER 2018

*With the year drawing to a close we thought that we would focus on maintaining cow health over the winter months. After a very dry summer and, for many farmers, decreased forage stocks going into the winter months, it is crucial to budget these to ensure maximum utilisation- particularly through the transition period.*

## TRANSITION COW MANAGEMENT

### What is the transition period and why is it so important?

The transition phase is from dry off at 60 days pre-calving to 30 days after calving. This period of 90 days is the critical window for setting up your cows to maximise their fertility and production across the whole of their lactation. Although each farm will be different, the key principles for managing our cows through the transition phase remain the same: we need to maintain dry matter intake to ensure metabolic stability through this period.

### What happens if this goes wrong?

After calving the energy demand for cows will rapidly increase due to starting lactation. This demand needs to be met, but in cases where this doesn't happen the cow enters a phase of negative energy balance. This can lead to ketosis with or without clinical signs.

Cows suffering for ketosis will have:

- Decreased milk production – 300kg of milk is lost over 305d yield in cows and up to 500kg in heifers
- Decreased fertility – increased days open (not in calf) due to reduced conception rates with more non-cycling and cystic cows.
- Higher risk of post-calving disease - retained placenta; metritis; left/right displaced abomasum; ultimately at a higher risk of being culled

### Who's most at risk from ketosis?

This will vary between farms, but more generally cows at the greatest risk are:

- Sick (suddenly ill cows)
- Old – >3 lactations\*
- Fat (or thin) – BCS > 3.5
- Twin pregnancy

\*Heifers are also more likely to be at risk on farms where they are not managed in a separate fresh group, or they don't have enough feed space.

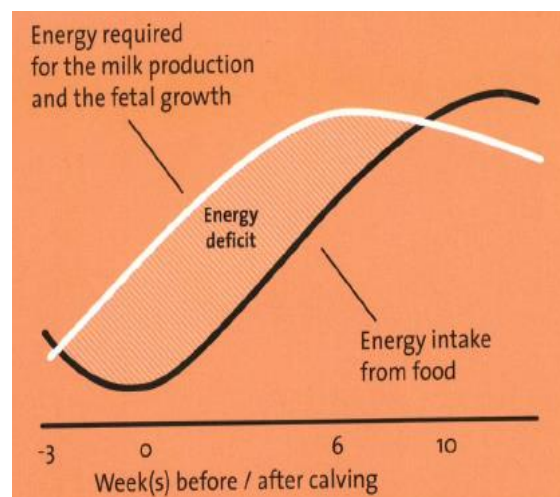
### How can I protect my herd from ketosis?

- Feed fence availability; >75cm feed space access per cow, or 5 headlocks for every 4 cows
- Water availability; >10cm access to clean water per cow and at least 2 locations in the pen
- BCS; <10% cows at or above 3.5
- Mobility score; no score 3
- Minimise group changes from drying off to calving and then join herd in at least pairs
- Transition disease levels; do we record levels of hypocalcaemia? Displaced abomasum? Retained placentas? Mastitis in first 30days? Ketosis? - all are indicators of transition success
- Rumination; are 90% of resting cows ruminating? >60chews per cud
- Targeting the individuals who are at higher risk of ketosis (see



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above) with a Kexxtone bolus will help to reduce the risk of ketosis.

- A Kexxtone bolus 3-4 weeks pre-calving can be administered which will increase the amount of glucose available and therefore decrease post calving illness associated with Ketosis, speak to us about Ketosis prevention in your herd.

### What have our farm vets been up to over the last few months?

- Lucy and Tom have been running a series of Milk Sure meetings for our dairy clients – they have been very well received and we are hoping to run more in the New Year if there is interest.
  - Will and Nicky held several meetings regarding 'BVD - Stamp It Out', we have nearly 40 Farmers signed up for the scheme. If you are interested in joining, we will be holding further meetings in the New Year.
  - Lottie has been on a youngstock training course and she will be rolling out some schemes to improve your calf health and performance in the spring.
  - Maria has been performing lots of routine health screening for farms seeking accreditation for different diseases.
  - Caroline has been locuming for us since October and has been helping out with our emergencies.



SUPPORTER



### *Summerleaze Vets* *Christmas & New Year Opening Hours*

<i>Christmas Eve</i>	8am till 4.30pm
<i>Christmas Day</i>	Closed - Emergencies Only
<i>Boxing Day</i>	Closed - Emergencies Only
<i>New Year's Eve</i>	8am till 4.30pm
<i>New Year's Day</i>	Closed - Emergencies Only

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**Wishing all our client's, a very Happy Christmas  
and a healthy New Year**

**PLEASE** rest assure that we have dedicated Farm and Equine vets on call for emergencies throughout the festive season. People often say "I wasn't sure if it was an emergency or not" - the easy answer is, if you are worried enough to think "I might need the vet" then call - we would rather speak to you or see your animal if you are concerned, than not see it!