

NEWSLETTER

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Seasonal reminders:

- Any calf that has a hernia needs treatment as soon as possible. The anaesthetic and surgery are much more difficult and prone to complications if the calf is bigger and older.
- Bulls should be fertility tested and vaccinated annually against vibrio and pestivirus at least 2 weeks before you plan to use them. All newly purchased bulls should be ear notched and tested for BVD.
- Late calving cows, especially older cows are more prone to milk fever. Cows with milk fever in hot weather are very susceptible to heat stress. Douse cows with cold water if down and exposed to the sun.
- Consider vaccinating your calves with the pinkeye vaccine **Piligard**. Calves require just one dose of **Piligard**.



When to treat non-cycling cows

If cows have been treated with PG the best time to treat non-cyclers is 11 days after the last injection of PG. This is because the follicles in the ovaries are at the right stage where they can best respond to an injection of GnRH (Gonabreed).

It is tempting to treat non-cyclers a week or so after PG as most of the cows that were going to respond have already done so but it is better to wait the full 11 days.

In a double PG synchronisation program, it means that all cows are joined in the first 21 days of mating as the non-cycling cow treatment program is 10 days long.

How many bulls do I need?

More than you had last year – is the answer on most farms. Every year during pregnancy testing we see examples where the bulls have left too many empty cows.

The message from InCalf is that you need 3 bulls for every 100 cows at the **start of the AI period** or 4 per 100 cows if synchrony is used. This means that if you have 200 cows to join at the start of AI you will need between 6 and 8 bulls.

This assumes a 6-week AI period where you get just over half the cows pregnant. Our district average 6-week in calf rate is about 53% which means that in our herd of 200 cows there will be, on average, 90 something empty cows when the bulls go in.

It is important to have the bulls on the farm several weeks before they are due to start work. Sperm production is a delicate business and the stress of transport and acclimatisation will upset sperm quality. The production line for



sperm takes 70 days so it can take this long to correct any problems.

Aim to give the bulls plenty of time to socialise before they are put to work. Bulls will work out a hierarchy or pecking order and it is better to do this well before they are expected to find cows on heat and get them pregnant. You want your bulls to be lovers not fighters.

Other bull tips

➤ **Keep the resting bulls away from the dairy**

The group of bulls that are resting should be kept in an area that has plenty of shade and water. If that area is near the dairy the bulls that are with the cows will try to stop the cows from going anywhere near the resting bulls. If you have ever had a bull that walks in front of the cows and slows things down it is usually because he is trying to keep "his" cows away from his rivals.

➤ **Keep bulls off concrete**

There has been a swing towards using Friesian bulls over the last few years. In that time, we have seen both more injured cows and more lame bulls.

Big bulls are more prone to feet problems, so it is worth the extra hassle of drafting them off before they reach the concrete. This is difficult the first few times, but it is worthwhile persisting as bulls will eventually learn what to do.

It is also important that they don't get access to too much grain as this can also affect their feet. If bulls are rotated regularly and get no grain when they are rested and then a big slug again when they are with the cows it is likely they will get laminitis and more feet problems.

➤ **Vaccinate your bulls with pestigard and vibrovax**

Pestigard protects bulls against infection with BVD. If you have a BVD carrier in your herd unprotected

bulls can get a mild and temporary infection with BVD that has a serious effect on fertility.

Vibrio is a sexually transmitted disease spread from cow to cow by the bulls. Vaccinating halts the spread.

All bulls should be ear notch tested for BVD when they first arrive on your farm.

➤ **Virgin bulls need training**

It usually takes virgin bulls about a week to learn what they are supposed to do. If you have some empty carry-over cows that are on heat before the bulls are due to start it might be worth running these cows with the virgin bulls to let them get some practice.

➤ **Rotate bulls every 4 to 7 days**

Young bulls exhaust their supplies more quickly than older bulls and probably need to rest after 4 days. Older bulls pace themselves better but should not be left with the cows for longer than 7 days without a break.

➤ **Watch bulls mate**

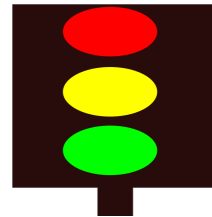
Make sure that each bull is capable of mating with cows on heat. There are many reasons why bulls cannot mate successfully, including: -

- Sore feet
- Sore back
- Damaged penis
- Hair ring around penis
- Low libido (no interest)

Excenel RTU sales as strong as ever

In our April newsletter we discussed the pro's and con's of using Excenel RTU. This is because there has been a lot of coverage in the media recently regarding antibiotic resistance in human hospitals. Invariably the discussion turns to the amount of antibiotics used in

livestock with the implication that this is where the antibiotic resistance originates.



We have recently reviewed the way we use antibiotics in the clinic and we are mostly comfortable with everything we do except for **Excenel RTU**.

Excenel RTU contains the antibiotic ceftiofur, a third-generation cephalosporin, that the human medicos would like to reserve for human use. Most of the Excenel that we use is for footrot and most people use it because of the nil milk withhold. As well as not having to discard milk there is peace of mind knowing that a relief milker will not slip up and put an antibiotic cow in the vat.

We would like to encourage people to use penicillin instead of Excenel RTU for lame cows. In most cases penicillin is just as effective but does have the added hassle of a milk withhold period.

Our thinking is that it is much better if we regulate ourselves and use this antibiotic only when it is necessary. The alternative is for the APVMA to ban the drug altogether if vets and farmers are seen to be not attempting to do the right thing.

At this stage we have not seen any decrease in Excenel sales since the April article.

We have put big red stickers on bottles of Excenel RTU to remind all of us to use this antibiotic judiciously.