

NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

- ◆ Seasonal reminders
- ◆ Pregnancy testing heifers
- ◆ Eye cancer in cows
- ◆ Eye cancer detection
- ◆ Heat Stress

Seasonal reminders:

- Do not let cattle graze country with significant amounts of heliotrope. Heliotrope damages the liver and cattle are affected months and even years later.
- Bulls should be vaccinated against vibrio and pestivirus at least 2 weeks before you plan to use them. Ear notch test all bulls for BVD when you first acquire the bull.



- Calves born to late calving cows may be more prone to illness in hot weather. These calves often do not get adequate colostrum and bugs can build up in the calf pens towards the end of calving. Prompt treatment with electrolytes is essential as calves often become dehydrated faster when compared to sick calves in cooler weather.
- Monitor calves for pinkeye and treat any cases early to reduce the spread through the group.

Pregnancy testing heifers

We like to pregnancy test heifers early because it is very difficult to age beyond 3½ months. The calf falls out of reach in heifers earlier than in older cows.

Compared with older cows, a higher percentage of heifers are pregnant in the first 3 weeks. An early preg test will only leave a few heifers that will require a second preg test later.

The advantage of identifying empty and late calving heifers is that they can be sold for export. Late calving heifers are less profitable because they are difficult to get back in calf quickly once they enter the milking herd and often end up empty or as carry-over cows.

If heifers have been artificially inseminated an early preg test will help identify those that are pregnant to AI. This is particularly important when you have used sexed semen.

When to pregnancy test

The best way to get accurate calving dates is to have two rounds of pregnancy testing.

1. The first round is done 7 or 8 weeks after the end of AI. Cows that are pregnant to AI are identified.
2. The second round is done 7 or 8 weeks after the bulls come out, so it is possible to identify all empty cows and cows that are pregnant to the bull.

Two rounds of pregnancy testing are more accurate because it is easier to age pregnancies early on. It is easy to tell an 8-week pregnancy from a 12-week pregnancy but very difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between a 5-month and 6-month pregnancy.

The advantages of accurate calving dates are: -

- Drying off dates can be more accurately judged. Late cows can be milked through June and July if conditions are favorable. There will be money to be made during these months.
- There is less chance of dry cow antibiotic residues in the milk.
- Cows can start getting their transition feed at the right time.

Last day of AI	Ideal time to preg test
Nov 17	Dec 29 – Jan 12
Nov 24	Jan 5 – 19
Nov 30	Jan 11-25
Dec 8	Jan 19 – Feb 2
Dec 15	Jan 27 – Feb 9
Dec 22	Feb 2 – 16
Dec 29	Feb 9 – 23
Jan 1	Feb 16 – Mar 2

Early pregnancy testing

With the ultrasound we have been pregnancy testing down to as low as day 31 after insemination. We have been doing this to identify non-pregnant cows that have not come back on heat.

These non-pregnant cows that are not seen back on heat are the “phantom cows” that often do not start cycling again until February or March. These cows are very frustrating, but when they are identified early enough there is a chance to join them again before it is too late.

Eye cancer in cows

Cancer eye in cattle is a squamous cell carcinoma and is similar to the more common types of skin cancer in humans.

We see three main types of eye cancer: -

- Cancer of the third eyelid

- Cancer on the eyeball
- Cancer of the top or bottom eyelid

Cancer of the third eyelid

The third eyelid is a membrane that lies on the nose side of the eye and helps clean the eyeball of dust and other foreign matter.

Third eyelids are either pink or black depending on the breed of cattle. Only pink third eyelids are prone to developing cancer. We very rarely see third eyelid cancers in Jerseys but commonly see it in Holsteins.

While third eyelid cancers are common, they are easy to remove so long as they are treated promptly. If left too long the cancer can become quite extensive and is harder to treat, in some cases it cannot be treated at all.

Abattoir regulations against eye cancers are strict and in advanced disease, the animal may not be allowed through an abattoir, meaning she will need to be sent to the knackery, losing the carcass value.

It is likely that eye cancers grow more quickly in the later stages of pregnancy because the cow’s immune system is suppressed, so this is another risk period where you should check eyes frequently.

Cancer on the eyeball

Cancer on the eyeball is less common than third eyelid cancer. These cancers usually start on the margin of the white part and dark part of the eyeball and look a little bit like a cauliflower.



Eye cancer detection

Eye cancers of the left eye are worse on some farms and on other farms the right eye seems to be more severely affected.

Our theory is that on rotary dairies that spin anti-clockwise the right eye

is seen twice a day by the cups-on person. The left eye is not seen as often, and so eye cancers have progressed further before they are noticed.

The opposite is true for platforms that spin clockwise.

Cows in herringbone dairies may have a similar problem if they only go in one side and that is the side where their eye cancer develops.

So, what is the answer? It may be worthwhile to designate one milking a month to eye cancer detection of the eye that is normally hidden. On anti-clockwise platforms, for example somebody positions him or herself in a position to observe left eyes. A good place to do this is the exit race.

Heat Stress

Heat stress in cattle occurs when they are exposed to environmental temperatures greater than 25°C, in combination with high humidity or direct sunlight. If cows are experiencing heat stress, they will actively seek shade and wet areas. Some cows will be agitated and breathe with an open mouth as their core temperature increases. Milk production and feed intake will drop. Animals experiencing heat stress need to be cooled down using fans and/or cold water over the body.

Sick cows and cows that experience milk fever are more vulnerable to heat stress. Some tips that help prevent cows from experiencing heat stress:

- Provide plenty of water
- Provide plenty of shade (trees or sheds)
- Use water sprinklers and/or fans at milking
- Put cows on the yards under sprinklers during the hottest part of the day
- **Adjust milking times to avoid the warmer period of the day- earlier morning and later evening milkings**