

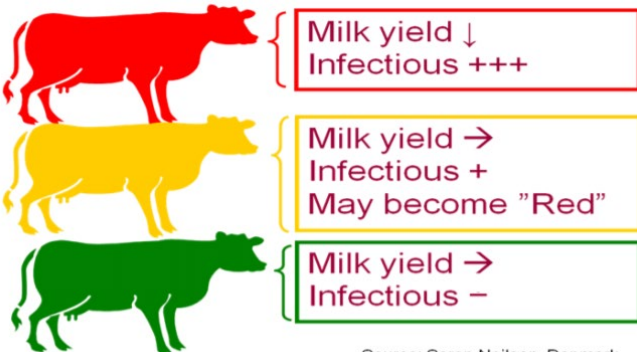
Reducing Milk Production and New Forest Eye

Unfortunately, with the lockdown there are some milk processors asking farms to reduce their milk production. So, we thought we would go through some ways of doing this cost effectively whilst maintaining cow health and welfare.

Bring culling forwards

This will help reduce the herd size and can help the overall health of the herd if carefully considered. It can be used as a good opportunity to reduce the number of Johne's antibody positive cows which will aid reducing transmission within the herd. Culling chronically high cell count cows or cows with recurrent mastitis will reduce contagious mastitis pathogens spreading within the herd also.

Calf feeding



Using milk produced to feed calves will not only help reduce your milk sold, but also reduce feed costs if powder is being used normally. However, there are problems and risks associated with this.

Dump milk should not be used to feed to calves!

Milk from cows that have had a positive Johne's antibody result should never be fed to calves. This will put not only the calves being fed the potentially infected milk at risk, but any in-contact calves also. Pathogens that cause scouring in calves can spread by whole milk feeding. With this in mind, unless a pasteurizer is used, we would

only recommend feeding whole milk to beef calves due to risk of infecting replacement heifers with Johne's.

Using a pasteurizer hugely reduces the risk of infecting calves with Johne's (still avoid using milk from Johne's cows) and will kill the pathogens that cause scouring. If used, all calves could be fed pasteurized whole milk and the cost of buying the pasteurizer will be clawed back by not having to buy milk powder.

Weaning calves later is another option which means more milk will be used to feed calves.

Drying off cows early

Drying off cows earlier will result in more cows at any one time being dry and therefore less cows in milk. If doing this, you will need to consider housing and feed space as your milking groups will need less and your dry cows will need more.

With bigger dry cow group sizes, it will be harder and take more time to detect any issues. Having a separate group for close up calving cows (3 weeks prior to calving) will mean the cows that need the most attention are all in the same place. This will allow closer monitoring and a bespoke management of nutrition and health during this critical period. The far-off dry groups can also have their own diet, allowing better control of body condition during a longer dry period and reducing the risk of cows getting too fat.

Cows should be producing less than 20 litres a day before being dried off. Discuss how it would be best to lower yields in cows giving over 20L pre drying off with your vet so this can be done in a way that suits your system. Water should always

be freely available and should never be restricted in an attempt to reduce milk production.

Altering milking cow diets

If the above strategies are not enough or suitable, then changing feeding strategies to reduce milk production can be done. This should be done in consultation with your nutritionist and/or vet as considerations for avoiding negative energy and mineral balance issues should be discussed.

A few other points to help reduce production and costs are:

- Turn cows out to graze to reduce cost of production
- Turn youngstock out – to reduce feed, labour and bedding
- Reduce milking frequency where possible



New Forest eye infections

We have seen a lot of cases of this so far this year so thought it was worth a mention in the newsletter. Also called Infectious Bovine keratoconjunctivitis, it is a highly contagious eye infection caused by the bacteria *Moraxella bovis*. The main methods of spread between cattle are flies or direct contact. This means that it is generally a disease that is more of a problem in the summer.

Clinical signs of New Forest eye are,

- tear-staining of the face
- pus matting the lashes and hair of the face
- conjunctivitis
- ulceration of the eye surface
- pain when the eye is exposed to sunlight

Affected eyes are very painful and disrupt grazing causing poor performance and even weight loss. Lesions in both eyes cause temporary blindness and the affected animals tend to wander aimlessly about. In severe cases, ulceration may progress to the surface of the eye rupturing

Most eye lesions are selected for treatment based on obvious tear-staining of the face and marked pain when the eye is exposed to direct sunlight.

Prompt treatment is essential. Topical ophthalmic antibiotic cream containing cloxacillin (Orbenin eye ointment) is commonly used. Antibiotic injection (e.g. with penicillin or oxytetracycline) into the conjunctiva around the upper part of the globe can be very effective but is difficult to achieve in fractious cattle and requires good restraint.

When subconjunctival or topical treatment is not practical then a single dose of long acting oxytetracycline or amoxycillin in the muscle or florfenicol under the skin are the best option.

Injection into the upper eyelid is commonly used. This technique has no advantage over injection into the muscle except for lower amounts of antibiotic used. With this technique there is a risk of increased trauma around the eye in fractious animals that are difficult to inject

If response to treatment is poor, veterinary attention should be sought. In severe cases vets can suture the eyelids together under local anaesthetic. The sutures must not contact the cornea and are removed after two weeks. Severely affected cattle should be housed with ready access to food and water.

Prevention and control involve:

- prompt treatments, recording animal numbers and dates when treated
- daily monitoring for new cases in an outbreak
- Regular fly control in summer months to reduce spread

Wishing you all well,

Will

