parklands VETERINARY GROUP Large Animal Services

vetPartners

Farm Newsletter

August 2021

RDA? Check your Transition Cow Management

Cow management has never been more important than now with the tighter margins on farm and the drive to reduce antibiotic use overall and the restriction on use of High Priority Critically important antibiotics. We are delighted that many of our farmers are continuing to adopt a good approach to improved cow management.

I was operating to fix a Right Displaced Abomasum (RDA) recently and the farmer asked me if I thought they had a lot of DAs on their farm. “Not for the number of cows you have” I replied. He seemed pleased with this, as they have made efforts to transition the cows better than before. The farmer went on to tell me the cows looked and did better than in the past. I asked what changes they had made and he replied the close up dry cows were getting grass silage with 2kg straw and 2kg of dry cow concentrate.

I was very pleased to hear this, as this is a “rule of thumb” diet we have been recommending for some time to dairy farmers and it seems to do well. However diet changes should always be discussed along with your nutritionist.

We continued to discuss his cattle and how best to maintain his high herd health. I commented that the transition period, three weeks before to three weeks after calving, seems to be responsible for most of the diseases a cow usually suffers from including:

· Milk fever
· Retained Cleansings
· Dirty Calfbeds
· Ketosis
· Mastitis
· Displaced Abomasum (DA)
· Poor fertility

I also added that some measures can be put in place to ensure our cows transition well including:

1. Ketosis monitoring of fresh calved cows

Ketosis is a common metabolic disease which most often occurs in early lactation, ketosis affects around 30% of cows. Feed intake post-calving is directly related to feed intake during the dry period. The greater the volume a cow eats pre-calving the more she will want to eat post-calving. Ideally an average Holstein-Friesian dry cow will be eating around 12-14kg of dry matter per day. The hidden costs of ketosis averages at over £200 per cow affected.

2. Dry cow condition scoring

It has been shown that fat cows have less appetite. This is because fat itself releases a hormone which directly suppresses the appetite centre in the brain. Body Condition Score (BCS) of dry cows forms part of the transition check everyone should do, highlighting whether BCS is within target for the overall group while also identifying individual cows which are more at risk of ketosis post-calving.

3. Rumen fill in dry cows

Rumen fill is a measure of how much a cow has eaten at the time of observation. It is scored on a scale of 1-5 and is done by looking at the left hand side of the cow and assessing how much the rumen fills out behind the ribs. We would hope to see scores of 4-5. Dry cows should be eating 12 to 14kg as Dry Matter and delivering 120MJ/cow/day and 13-5-15.5 protein.

4. Stocking density

We must ensure there is adequate feed trough space, (1m per dry cow is recommended), and water trough space (10cm trough edge per cow) for the number of cows in the group.

If you have any questions regarding heard health or Transitioning your cows speak to a Parklands vet.

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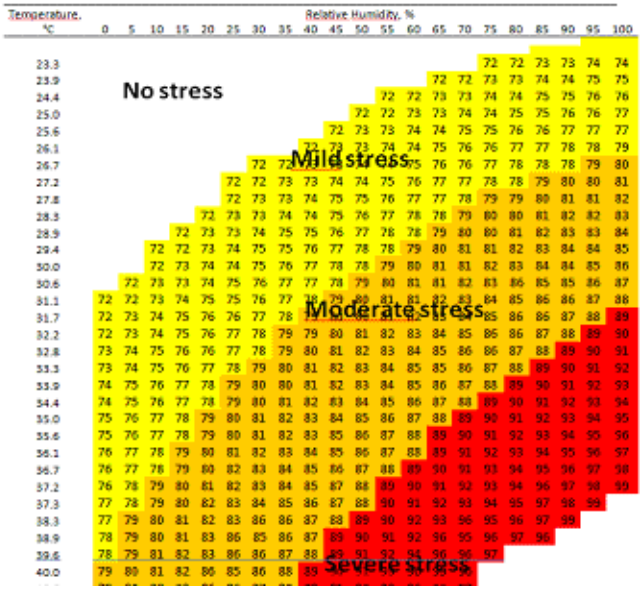
For further information please visit our website: **parklandsvets.com**

The temperatures have been hot recently and it looks as if this may return. This is having impacts on our livestock, the milk tanker drivers report milk is down on many farms. This is probably because of a number of issues including reduced intakes due to the heat and grass declining. We are seeing many more sick animals problems exacerbated by the heat and my general advice would be to keep a sick animal in during the day as the blazing sun coupled with the likelihood that the animal will probably not drink enough means they can be very sick in the evening. Below is a table showing the recommended MINIMUM water intake for different animals, its now more important than ever to check the **cleanliness of the water and troughs** and ensure good supply to maximise the amount of water each animal takes in during their time at the trough.

Weight (kg), or or production Level	Water intake (Litres) Temp 5°C	15°C	28°C
Calf 90	8	9	13
Calf 180	14	17	23
Yearling 360	24	30	40
Heifer 545	34	41	55
Dry cow 630	37	46	62
Lactation cow 9 kg/day	46	55	68
27 kg/day	84	94	99
36 kg/day	103	121	147
45 kg/day	122	143	174



It has reached 28°C or more here on numerous days so a high yielding cow should be drinking more than 174 litres per day! Even dry stock should be drinking much more than normal. **Cattle should always have access to shade and water**, if they are in the house then fans are a good way of cooling down. In dairy herds **all lactating and dry cows should all have at least 10cm of trough edge space** accessible (multiply number of cows in yard by 10cm for minimum trough edge space). Some herds have water sprinkler systems which are very effective at cooling cows. Our Relative humidity here for OUTSIDE (may be higher inside) in the middle of the day is 60-70% (goes up to 90% at night), this puts us easily into the mild heat stress area of the graph, and perhaps into the moderate heat stress on some days!

Flies!

The hot weather has really helped the fly population and there are numerous reports of summer mastitis occurring recently and serious irritation in the parlour. I have been in many livestock houses and most are "black" with flies at the moment. It is uncomfortable for us to work in these conditions so imagine how the animals feel being bitten all day, the flies are also an important way of spreading disease especially scour, mastitis and pink eye.

As well as pour ons for the control of flies on the animal many farms need to take a multi pronged approach and attack the flies on the housing and prevent breeding in the tanks.
One product which comes as granules, but is made up with water and painted or sprayed onto walls is an option. Another is designed for use in the slurry tanks where it kills the tiny fly larvae before they hatch into flies.
For more information contact a Parklands vet.