

HERD FERTILITY REVIEW

WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Fertility is one of the major factors affecting the efficiency of any dairy herd with AHDB Dairy estimating that poor fertility costs £25,000 per year in the average performing 100 cow herd as a result of lost milk production, fewer calves, higher culling and veterinary costs.

WHERE DO I START?

Improving fertility is best done as a whole farm approach. If you think the fertility of your herd is holding you back, the **starting point is to start collecting data** to determine the current fertility performance of your herd.

Follow the below checklist:

- ✓ Record any health issues for up to 60 days post calving
- ✓ Work with your vet to metricheck cows 3 weeks + post calving to detect endometritis
- ✓ Note down any cows that don't show heat and any reasoning why:
 - High lameness score ≥ 2
 - Low Body Condition Score (BCS) < 2
 - High milk yielders
- ✓ Carry out a feeding audit with your vet or independent nutritionist:
 - Check milking and dry cows are eating adequate dry matter intake
 - Assess that dry cow diets provides 13-14% Crude Protein
 - Analyse forage for mineral content - Magnesium, Zinc, Selenium & Copper are crucial trace minerals to aid fertility
 - Asses that dry cows have at least 0.75m of feed space if housed
- ✓ Re-visit calving records to and spot any obvious issues
- ✓ Complete and annual health & welfare review with your vet to discuss the herd medicine records and determine any obvious concerns and areas to reduce antimicrobial use
- ✓ Have a discussion with the whole farm team about the herd performance and where management could be improved

USING THE DATA?

Once you start collecting the data to give a clear picture of where to focus to improve the herd fertility, the **next step is to compare with others and set targets** with your vet to aim for over the next year. Here are the industry standard targets (Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)) for block and all year round calving herds as reported in AHDB InCalf Guide, and a place for you to note your own target KPI's:

BLOCK CALVING KPI	ALL YEAR ROUND KPI	MY KPIs
1. 6 week in-calf rate $> 78\%$	1. 21-day pregnancy rate - $> 25\%$	1.
2. 12 week not-in-calf - $< 10\%$	2. 80% served by 80 DIM	2.
3. six-week calved rate - $> 90\%$	3. 100 day in-calf - $> 50\%$	3.

(Dobson, H. et al. (2008)) Why is it getting more difficult to successfully artificially inseminate dairy cows?, *Animal : an international journal of animal bioscience*. Available here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2854809/> (Accessed: 22 May 2024).



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