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Feeding for Fertility

One of the major benefits from a good supplementation programme is increased fertility from a breeding herd. The benefits of more protein, energy and the absence of trace mineral deficiencies can significantly increase the reproductive abilities of the breeding cow. Phosphorous deficiencies have long been associated with poor reproductive performance in cows.

When pasture conditions deteriorate the breeding cow will simply shut down the reproductive system beyond any requirement to maintain a current pregnancy. When the cow calves the interval to when she cycles again is determined primarily by her body condition. A cow with some reserves of body fat is more likely to cycle and also commences to cycle earlier than a cow with low reserves of body fat. However when a cow calves she has great demands of energy to produce milk for her calf. She cannot eat enough feed to satisfy this demand for energy and so she uses body fat reserves to meet this demand. Even if she is fed at this stage any extra energy will be used to increase milk production not to put on body condition. From this we can see that the key to getting a cow to cycle after calving is her body fat reserves before calving. So supplementation in the months leading up to calving will help increase the fertility of your breeding herd.

Weight loss after calving can lead to reduced conception in cycling cows so keeping the supplement going will lower this weight loss and help the cow to go back into calf. Supplementation at this stage will also increase milk production and therefore lead to a larger, healthier weaner.

Supplementation can increase the supply of energy to the cow on dry feed by increasing total pasture intake, increasing the digestibility of the feed eaten and also when Bovatec is included by increasing the efficiency with which that cow can use the energy in the feed. So a supplement like Quicklick or Liquid Nitrogen will mimic the effect of Spike feeding and create a spike supplement effect. To be effective cows need to be supplemented for at least 50 days prior to the main calving season. First calf heifer will generally benefit the most from supplements prior to calving.

An improvement in calving percentages has been experienced by many Quicklick users. One customer, who feeds all year round, reported an increase in branding percentages from 65% up to 90% despite encountering deteriorating seasonal condition.

Another aspect of fertility that is often overlooked is bull fertility. When bulls are stressed including nutritionally they cease production of sperm. As it takes a few months for a viable sperm to be produced then a stress event can cause infertility for a few months following the event.

When looking at fertility it is important to remember the adverse effect reproductive diseases can cause. A proper vaccination program for Leptospirosis and Vibriosis is vital to a healthy and profitable breeding herd

A well planned supplementation and vaccination program can significantly increase the fertility of your breeding herd by keeping your cows in better condition than they would be otherwise.

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