FriarsMoor
Livestock Health

Newsletter
June 2024

HEAT STRESS IN DAIRY COWS

By Yoav Alony-Gilboa DVM MRCVS CertSHP

As temperatures continue to rise globally year on year, farms are required to tackle heat stress in order to avoid considerable losses. Care should be taken to look at all stages of growth, from day one calves, to adult (both milking and dry) cows.

Heat stress occurs when a cow absorbs and produces more heat than she can lose to the environment.
High ambient temperature, humidity, and exposure to solar radiation, alongside the metabolic heat produced by the cow when digesting feed, will cause cattle to accumulate heat. Dairy cattle will try to "lose heat" by sweating, panting, and standing where cooler air blows over them. When ambient temperature rises above 24°C and relative humidity reaches above 70%, cows will struggle to lose excess heat. The length of exposure to heat stress is also a major factor, and when continuously exposed to mild to moderate heat stress for more than 17 hours, dairy cows will drop yield by an average of 2 kg of milk.

Cows with heat stress become less active, breath rapidly or pant and drool. Their dry matter intake and feed conversion efficiency will drop and as a result so will their milk yield and milk solids (fat and sometimes protein). Heat stressed cows will spend more time standing (to increase their exposed body surface), often in pooled slurry, trying to cool their body and feet. This type of behaviour will predispose them to lameness due to solar ulcers and digital dermatitis. Cows will often bunch together in the coolest place available or lay down in wet areas, thus increasing the chance of mastitis.

Dry cows that have struggled with heat stress during the transition period will often calve early, produce lighter calves, and colostrum low both in quantity and quality.
After calving, these cows will be predisposed to ketosis, metritis, and displaced abomasum and often struggle to reach their full milk production potential.

Conception rate drops during times of heat stress. Cows will exhibit oestrus behaviour for shorter periods, resulting in an increased number of "open days", and higher overall culling rate. Synchronisation protocols and timed insemination might help somewhat to negate this negative effect. Conception rates may continue to be low as follicular development is sub-optimal. High twinning rate is also often observed.

Youngstock also suffer with heat stress . Milk fed calves must always have clean water available to them - as milk feeding alone might lead to dehydration and death. As feed conversion efficiency and feed intake drops, care should be taken to reduce heat stress otherwise, animals may fail to achieve their growth targets.

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Heat stress can be reduced using a combination of means, some will require a capital investment, but some can be achieved at little cost:

- Present animals with high quality feed to reduce metabolic heat production.
- Ensure enough trough space and possibly present the bulk of the feed in the evening, when temperatures drop, and intakes increase.
- Ensure constant, ample supply of fresh, clean water to all age groups.
- When on pasture, ensure water troughs are close by so cows can access easily.
- Provide shade to cows at pasture, or house during the hot hours of the day.
- Reduce stocking density in sheds and ensure ample shade is provided. Insulate roofs where possible.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and a flow of fresh air in sheds.
- "Shower" cows in collecting yards or feed passages and cool the air around them with high pressure misters. When wetting animals, control the amount of water used, and wipe the teats dry before cluster attachment during milking, to reduce the chances of mastitis.
- Use blast fans to ensure fresh air circulation around the animals and help keep feed, beds, and teats dry.
- Fan installation is a financial investment, and these systems will increase running and maintenance costs. However, reducing the level of heat stress is probably a worthy investment on most farms due to both short- and long-term effects described.

We would be happy to advise further on ways of reducing heat stress to cows. As no two farms are the same, a bespoke plan should be considered for each farm.

CALF REARING COURSE LEVEL 1

Friday 14th June 2024
10.30am – 3.30pm
Hanford Farm, Hanford, DT11 8HN

The course is appropriate for anyone relatively new to rearing dairy replacements or beef calves. Join us to:

- Understand why 'colostrum is gold' and optimising colostrum intake in calves.
- Learn about the key practical aspects of feeding milk and solid feed to calves.
- Understand how to recognise early signs of illness in calves and how to treat them.
- Discuss the fundamental aspects which staff can influence to improve the calf environment.

£100 inc VAT per person. 25% discount for youngstock group member farms - Refreshments and lunch included.

For more information or to book your slot, please call the farm office on 01258 472314 or go to https://friarsmoorlivestockhealth.co.uk/events/

DRUG UPDATES

We will now be stocking Rimadyl for pain relief and anti-inflammatory use. This will not affect other pain relief options you may be used to. Rimadyl LA is licenced IV or SC at 1ml/35kg for a single dose anti-inflammatory. It has a zero milk withdrawal, meaning it combines benefits of both Metacam and Ketofen. Please talk to your vet for more information.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

18 JUNE

TOP TIPS FOR AUTUMN CALVING

10am - 1 pm
West Stour Village Hall
Join us for a round table discussion on achieving youngstock success for autumn calving 2024.
Lunch will be provided

18 JUNE

BEEF GENETICS
STAY AHEAD O F THE GAME.

4pm - 6pm
West Stour Village Hall
Please join us for a round table discussion with representatives from Zoetis and ABP.
Refreshments to be provided.
FREE OF CHARGE.

25 JUNE

MASTERING MEDICINES COURSE

11.30am - 2pm
The course will include identifying the condition you are treating, the best medicine to administer, the dose rate, route of administration and the withdrawal periods and storage and disposal.
Location TBC.

Cost: £70 plus VAT

26 JUNE

NEW HERDSPERSON COURSE

A complete introduction to all aspects central to the successful running of a dairy herd.
Every Wednesday 11:00-13:30 from 26/06/2024 until 07/08/2024 with lunch provided.
Cost: £420 (Limited spaces available)
Locations: TBC

STAFF NEWS:

Sadly Pippa, our foot trimmer, will be leaving us this month for pastures new. We wish her all the best for her new venture

G&S SHOW BBQ!

YOUR BBQ TICKETS ARE INCLUDED IN NEXT MONTHS BILLS

This year for the Gillingham and Shaftesbury show we are sending out BBQ tickets again for you all to bring to our hospitality tent on show days. If you require more tickets than we have sent do not hesitate to get in touch and we will get more sent out so everyone gets some. We look forward to seeing you all!

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