FriarsMoor Livestock Health

Newsletter
February 2024

TRANSITION SUCCESS

By Helen Rogers and James Husband

It is well recognised that the primary factor determining the success of your transition period is Dry Matter Intake (DMI). At the XLVets Transition Cow Roadshow last year, Steve Le Blanc presented data illustrating that 82% of DMI in dry cows is determined by management and not body condition score (BCS), diet formulation or parity. Driving DMI in your dry cows and fresh calvers is relevant regardless of the management system, breed, yield or parity of the dry cows. As an example, in a dry Holsteins, a 1kg/day decrease in DMI doubles the risk of subclinical ketosis post calving.

The ultimate dry cow management to maximise transition success would include:

1. 3-5% of the ration left over every day
2. 30 inches (75cm) feed space per 750kg cow (or 4 cows per 5 head yokes)
3. Feed trough depth that allows access to all of the diet put out
4. Two sources of water per dry cow yard
5. Adequate water supply to allow for 4 litres of water to be drunk per kg DMI

Great success in driving DMI has been achieved by feeding dry cows twice a day. Provided the diet can be protected from the elements, it can be mixed once a day and then stored prior to putting it out as a second feed. Kexxtone boluses can also be administered to at risk dry cows three weeks prior to calving.

Supporting at risk cows:

What are effective interventions for ketotic cows?

Several feed additives have been extensively researched:

1. **Propylene glycol:** The cow can use glycol to make glucose which is required for milk production and will be in short supply after calving. This is effective at doses of 300ml/day given for 3 to 5 days.
2. **Calcium propionate:** Used by the cow to make glucose, this has the added benefit of providing calcium too. This needs to be supplied at 400-500g per day.
3. **Choline:** A recent review paper looking at the most effective treatments for fatty liver concluded that consistent improvements were only seen if energy sources (propylene glycol) were given with choline. The choline acts as an antioxidant and helps the cow produce the transport protein that clears the liver of fat (methionine can do a similar job). An analogy is that the propylene glycol is the fuel in the tank of the car but unless the engine is running well, the car won't run well. The liver is the metabolic engine of the cow and unless it is healthy immunity, and milk production will be compromised.

How to supplement choline?

Choline can be supplemented in the transition ration to the point of calving, but unless a herd has a fresh cow group it can't be supplemented post calving without giving to the whole herd. Targeted dosing can be achieved using boluses. Trial work looking at yield response, has shown these to be most effective when given:

- At or soon after calving to fat cows that carry a higher risk of excess fat mobilization. In the trial, bolused cows that were condition score 3.5 or above gave an average of 5 litres more milk at the first recording compared with similar cows that were not supplemented.
- In conjunction with energy precursors such as glycol, to cows that have subclinical ketosis, to allow the liver to function more effectively.
- To sick cows post calving which will be mobilising fat and be in poor metabolic health probably with other appropriate treatments depending on the disease present.

Use of Choline is a relatively new tool in the management of cows who are at risk for transition 'failure'. Please do speak to us to find out whether this could be a suitable tool to help these problem cows and to identify ways to maximise your DMI in your dry cows.

Many thanks to James Husband for providing content for this article.

SHEEP SCANNING

Do you need your sheep scanned for pregnancy? Alex is available to book by calling the office on 01258472314. For best results to confirm fetal numbers; ewes should be 70-80 days in lamb.

STAFF UPDATE

We have sadly said goodbye to Izzie as she will not be returning after her maternity leave. Izzie has been with us for 15 years and has always been a friendly face in the farm office. We wish her all the best in her next chapter.

BRANCH UPDATES

Closworth

Our Closworth branch officially opened last month on the 15th January and our new branch manager, Caz, has enjoyed welcoming you all in!

Blandford

Our Blandford branch is now closed on a Saturday. It will remain open Monday-Friday between 8:30am-6pm for drug collections. We are sorry for any inconvenience this causes.

NEW BUILD UPDATE

We did not flood, snow did not stop play and building is carrying on at a pace! The 1st floor is well underway and the roof is due to go on at the end of this month.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

21 FEB

MASTERING MEDICINES

Wednesday 21st February. Location TBC. 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.

7 MAR

MILKSURE

Thursday 7th March, 11am-1pm. Location TBC. This course focuses on how medicines are used on dairy farms and how increasing awareness of medicines usage can reduce antibiotic usage and decrease the risk of bulk tank failures. Part one will be undertaken in a group and part two on your own farm with a vet.

13 MAR

LAMBING COURSE

Wednesday 13th March 2024, 10am-4pm. Held at a farm near Sturminster Newton – details given on booking. Participants will learn how to prepare their flock for lambing. Using a lambing simulator, we will teach people when and how to safely intervene with a lambing ewe.£100 inc VAT, lunch included.

19 MAR

ROMANIAN MASTERING MEDICINES

Wednesday 19th March. Locations TBC. The course will be held in Romanian. 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.

25 26 27 MAR

PRACTICAL AI COURSE

DAY 1: Monday 25th March @ Sturminster branch. DAY 2: Tuesday 26th March - Location TBC. DAY 3: Wednesday 27th March - Location TBC.

This is a three-day training course, which consists of one theory training day followed by two practical training days.

For more information/to book on our courses please contact the farm office on 01258472314 or email us at farmoffice@friarsmoorlivestockhealth.co.uk