

**Vol. 34 No. 313**

**February 2020**

## **A Year in Review and Planning for the Future**

This time of year offers a small window when many dairy farmers have time to stop and think about the year gone by and what they should do different this year. Accounting, agronomy and milk production are always analysed but animal health should not be overlooked. What went well and where did you struggle? Did you have too much disease or had to cull too many animals for the wrong reasons? How much is too many?

I'm sure many who are reading this are tired of hearing it, but accurate disease records and analysis of these records are an important component of the animal health program for your herd. As of recently, the recording of infectious diseases for cows and calves is a required element for ProAction. This is very useful data and it would be a shame to go through the trouble of writing all this stuff down just to ignore it.

The recording of following diseases is required under ProAction.

### **Cows**

- Abortion
- Lameness
- Mastitis
- Diarrhea
- Pneumonia
- Death

### **Calves**

- Diarrhea
- Pneumonia
- Death

In addition, the following metabolic diseases/conditions in cows are important to track because of the significant economic impact they have.

- Milk fever
- Displaced abomasum
- Retained placenta
- Ketosis
- Stillbirth

Culls are a necessary part of herd improvement. Despite what some may suggest, there is no one ideal cull rate. The most appropriate cull rate for your herd is dependant on herd growth, animal inventory, performance of cows already in the milking herd, the production potential of upcoming replacements and the current economic environment in the dairy industry. Because of these factors, cull requirements can vary widely over time. Culling can be a good thing if cows are replaced at the right time for economic reasons. Forced culls are what we try to avoid but this can be easier said than done. Ideally, the freshening of replacements should be the driver of cull rate, not health problems or low production. If the opposite is true and cows are "breaking", the cause(s) must be identified and corrected. The challenge with this on many herds is the inconsistent recording of culling reasons and the lack of benchmarking data available because of this.

## **Herd Health Annual Reviews**

For those that are not already aware, our clinic has been providing a service to dairy clients where we review the past year's animal health performance data with an emphasis on disease and culls in cows and replacements. Farmers enrolled in this program are required to have current and accurate animal health records. If this data is accessible, the herd veterinarian will arrange the compilation of the data, calculate incidence rates, and discuss the results with the farmer and help him/her develop a plan. By having many herds involved in the program, we are better able to identify local trends, consider how industry events may have an impact on this, and see what herds can achieve. Our veterinarians can advise on finding opportunities and setting goals. If this appeals to you, and you would like to better understand the health and performance of your herd, talk to your herd veterinarian to learn more.

Thomas Veens DVM

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### **Reminder**

**Heartland Veterinary Services is no longer running antibiotic residue tests on bulk tank milk samples.**

**The reason being that our equipment is not sensitive enough to identify certain antibiotics (in bulk tank milk) at the level that the DFO and processors are testing for.**

**Note- Heartland Veterinary Services will continue to complete antibiotic residue testing on individual cow milk samples. In the event that you have a bulk tank milk sample that needs to be tested moving forward- please contact your DFO field rep.**

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**Have you signed up for a ProAction BioSecurity meeting yet?**

**If not, please call the clinic (519-291-2060 ext. 2) and RSVP today.**

**Upcoming date:**

**Wed., February 19<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-3:00pm (Heartland- Listowel)**

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**Would you like to start paying your monthly Heartland statement via on-line banking?**

**If so, please add "Heartland Animal Hospital & Veterinary Services" as a payee. Note- we are listed with most financial institutions.**

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## **Save the date!**

**Heartland Veterinary Services 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Dairy Day**

**Wednesday, February 26, 2020**

**Please call to RSVP**