

## **Dairy Day Recap**

Thank you to everyone who came out to our dairy day at the Listowel Agricultural Hall on February 26. We had great attendance and are very grateful to our excellent speakers for sharing their knowledge with us. If you're anything like me, if I don't write it down, I don't remember it! So, I thought I would share a recap of the main points from each of the speakers.

### **Managing Stress in Transition Cows: Keys to Health & Production**

#### **Dr. Trevor DeVries- Dairy at Guelph**

Transition cows experience significant stress from diet changes, calving, and environmental factors. Research highlights that **stress reduction improves health, milk yield, and longevity**. Here are some tips on how to support your transition cows:

#### **1. Monitor Feed Intake**

- Cows that have a greater reduction in feed intake prior to calving are at higher risk of disease (e.g. subclinical ketosis, inflammation, rumen instability, etc.).
- Ensure **consistent dry matter intake** and prevent drastic diet shifts.
- Maintain **rumination time**—high-intake cows need to spend **8-9 hours ruminating/day**. Most high-quality rumination time is spent **lying down**.

#### **2. Reduce Stressors**

- **Overcrowding:** Keep stocking density <100% in free stalls. **Provide 30 inches of bunk space per cow and 4 inches of water space per cow with more than one location per pen.**
- **Group cows to minimize stress and optimize behaviour:** research shows that frequent regrouping increases stress, reduces milk yield and increases inflammation.
- **Heat Stress:** Cooling dry cows benefits both them and their calves.
- **Comfort:** Ensure proper stall bedding, stall design, and minimize standing time. Cows lying down ruminate more!
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### **Dairy Calf Health: Reducing the Impact of Diarrhea**

#### **Dr. Dave Renaud- Dairy at Guelph**

Calf diarrhea is costly and affects growth, long-term productivity, and survival. Research shows **better colostrum management, nutrition, and a clean environment** significantly improve calf resilience.

#### **1. Importance of Colostrum & Transition Milk**

- **Early colostrum feeding = better immunity.** Ideally feed the **first colostrum meal as soon as possible after birth**, then a **second meal within 12 hours**.
- Use a **refractometer** to ensure colostrum quality (>22% Brix).
- **Feeding transition milk** (first few milkings) can support gut health and development.
- Calves that receive a high plane of nutrition (e.g. 8L of milk/day or more) show more resilience to disease.

## 2. Managing & Treating Diarrhea

- **Hydration is critical.** Calves with **mild diarrhea** should continue milk feeding along with **oral electrolytes**.
- **Pain management** (NSAIDs like metacam) improves recovery.
- **Antibiotics only when necessary:** research has shown that only **30% of diarrhea cases require antibiotics**. Overuse increases antimicrobial resistance.
- **Create a protocol** for diarrhea treatment with your veterinarian and stick to it.

### Milk Quality: Best Practices for SCC Reduction & Udder Health

#### Dr. Phil Meadows- Boehringer Ingelheim

Maintaining **low somatic cell count (SCC)** and **excellent milk quality** starts with **hygiene, milking practices, and cow comfort**.

#### 1. Key Practices for Low SCC

- **Clean cows, clean teat ends, clean bedding.** Sand bedding is preferred for udder health.
- **Milking Routine Matters:** Effective prep routines and proper teat dip application reduce mastitis risk. Consider posting your prep routine where milkers can read it.
- **Equipment maintenance:** ensure you are servicing your equipment regularly (e.g. the plate cooler), follow your robot maintenance list, ask for help to identify problems (e.g. improper slope or milk slugging).

#### 2. Mastitis Treatment: Rethinking Antibiotics

- **Not all mastitis cases require antibiotics.**
  - Only about one-third (~33%) of non-severe clinical mastitis cases will benefit from using antibiotics. Routinely culture cases to guide or adjust treatment decisions (e.g. 80% of no growths have been shown to clear up on their own).
- **Pain management matters:** NSAID (e.g. Metacam or Anafen) use on clinical mastitis cases improves bacteriological cure rates and reproductive performance.
- **Follow treatment protocols** to ensure effective recovery and prevent resistance.

### Dairy Farmers of Ontario Update

#### Mike Arent

- National Dairy Code Changes: many changes came into effect in April 2024, more will be introduced over many years starting in April 2027. To learn more visit the National Farmed Animal Care Council website or ask your veterinarian.
- Field Service Representative (FSR): FSRs are the first point of contact with DFO for all concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out with help on proAction questions, milk quality issues, or to provide other resources.
- Enhanced bactoscan and progressive penalty program is in place: these enhanced laboratory services offer better overall service to producers, with the end goal being improved milk quality.

- If issues are popping up with this program, please contact your FSR to help troubleshoot some common problems.

Final note from the author: If you have any questions about the topics discussed at Dairy Day, please don't hesitate to reach out to your veterinarian. We are dedicated to collaborating with you and using the best available evidence to ensure your herd's success.

-Daniella Rizzo, DVM

## Upcoming Holiday Hours

The clinic will be closed Friday April 18, 2025 for Good Friday. As always, veterinarians will be available 24-7 for emergency service.