

Dairy Reproduction Troubleshooting

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O'Connor. Calcium, he said, is very important to muscle contraction.

In addition to calcium, phosphorus has been traditionally linked to reproductive performance by a 1950's study. However phosphorus intake is not a problem today, as studies now show that phosphorus levels are not as much of a factor in reproductive performance when cows are fed a good diet.

In a more recent, 785-cow worldwide study, researchers found that there is little or no difference in reproduction when the herd ingests normal or excessive levels of phosphorus.

In addition, lowered phosphorus levels did not affect the milk yield or bone strength of the cows.

"It's costly to feed that much phosphorus," he said, adding that in addition to cost, high levels of phosphorus is an environmental concern with nutrient management.

Breeding Systems

"I'm not up here to say you have to use hormones to get your cows pregnant. There are plenty of systems out there. As in all of life, the better ones seem to be the more complicated ones. I'm going to present results to what your appetite, but let you make the decision," said O'Connor.

A producer's objective should be to develop a plan to get a high percentage of the cows pregnant in early lactation. A New York study found that if a cow comes into heat early, she will have a better first service conception rate.

"The more cycles a cow has prior to the time you want to breed the cow, the higher your success rate at the first ser-

vice," he said.

Only 50 percent of heats are detected in the U.S., and 5-15 percent of cows are not in heat when they are bred. According to Genex figures, the conception rate in Pennsylvania is 33 percent and the pregnancy rate is 15 percent.

Monday Morning Program

"Producers are breeding cows not in heat or not catching them in heat because it's a labor-intensive chore," said O'Connor. The benefits of estrous synchronization may help alleviate some of these problems.

The "Monday Morning Program" is a 14-day, two-injection plan. The cows are injected with prostaglandin (PG), come into heat, and then bred. A "set up shot" will help the cow be more likely to respond to the breeding shot, said O'Connor. The PG shot is administered 14 days prior to the end of the voluntary waiting period before the cow is back in the breeding program.

For instance, if a producer waits 50 days before rebreeding a cow, administer the shot 36 days before the end of the waiting period. "A higher percentage of the cows should be in heat after the breeding shot," he said.

Ovsynch Program

The popular ovsynch program, combining prostaglandin and the GnRH hormone, now costs less than in the past. In fact, a half-dose of GnRH will suffice "if you can consistently deliver the smaller dose," he said.

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