

Semen Handling: Don't Fumble The Ball After A Long Drive!

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Much has been written in recent months about new or modified estrous synchronization programs for lactating cows. The primary purpose of such programs is to improve the percentage of eligible cows that are inseminated and conceived during the estrous cycles that occur shortly after the voluntary waiting period (VWP). Many dairy producers have adapted such programs to fit their management schedule to reproductive management becomes more systematic.

Whether cows are inseminated based upon signs of heat or inseminated at a fixed time, it is crucial that proper semen handling procedures and insemination technique are used. Achieving good reproductive performance is always a challenge.

Don't fumble the ball after investing time and money implementing a sound reproductive management game plan. Here are some reminders.

- Avoid excessive movement or abuse of the semen tank. It isn't a "Rubbermaid product." Keep

the tank elevated above the concrete floor or other wet, poorly ventilated surfaces. Corrosion of the metal shell will shorten the life of the tank and possibly cause failure to maintain temperature.

- Ensure A.I. equipment is kept clean, dry, and not exposed to excessive temperatures.

- Develop a semen inventory system which will help avoid excessive searching for semen and exposure to dangerously high temperatures within the neck of the tank.

- Some farm nitrogen tanks contain semen from as many as three breeding organizations. Thaw the semen according to the recommendation of the organization that supplied the semen. When in doubt, use a warm water thaw (95°F).

- Once the semen is thawed, take precaution to prevent thermal shock. Although prevention of cold shock is emphasized most frequently, heat shock can occur if the insemination device is exposed to elevated temperatures during the warmer months. Thermal shock is permanent injury to sperm caused by sudden changes in semen temperature after

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