

nificantly associated with death, with abortion and mastitis actually protective. The syndromes with the highest risk of death were: down (RR=11.3), hypocalcemia (RR=5.9) and digestive (RR=5.5). The relative risk of cows being sold was significantly influenced by all syndromes except down and lameness. Pneumonia and digestive disease had the highest relative risk for being sold (RR=2.3 for both).

Significance

This dairy complex had lactational disease incidences similar to estimates across the U.S. Results from this study have focused disease detection and prevention strategies on health problems that most impact mortality and culling. Ongoing efforts are assessing the impact of health events and their sequelae on culling and death.

Delayed insemination optimizes conception in dairy cows with natural estrus

A. Villarroel, DVM, MPVM, PhD, DACVPM, CVA, CTP
Afimilk USA, Ltd., Fitchburg, WI 53711

Introduction

Dairy farmers struggle to decide when to inseminate a cow after estrus is detected, mainly because heat detection methods have changed over time and new rules apply. Although the AM-PM rule was widely used during the time of visual heat detection, with the advent of timed insemination protocols, many dairies have decided to inseminate only once every day, typically in the morning. This has led to inseminate cows as soon as they show estrus signs in fear of being too late when inseminating the following day. The objective of this study was to compare conception risk in cows inseminated at different times from the time of estrus detection via pedometers.

Materials and Methods

This was a retrospective study at 2 commercial dairy farms in the US, milking 3x/day and fitted with freestalls. Cows were fitted with pedometers (AfiAct, Afimilk Ltd., Israel) that allowed coding cows for high activity for each of the 3 milking sessions separately (H1, H2, and H3). Cows with prolonged heats were assigned multiple heat codes corresponding to each of the sessions with high activity. Estrus was defined as either a single session activity deviation $\geq 140\%$ compared to the previous 10-day average of the corresponding milking session, or a combined activity deviation of at least 80% in 1 session and 90% in the following session.

Both farms inseminated once per day between 6 and 11am. The proportion of cows that conceived when inseminated 1, 2 or 3 sessions (approx. 8, 16, and 24 hrs) after registering a heat code were compared using a standard Z-test ($\alpha=0.05$).

Results

A total of 1,964 inseminations resulting in 626 pregnancies (31.8%) recorded during a 4-month period were included in the analyses. Only cows that were inseminated once in that cycle were included (i.e. no double breedings). Overall, 62.5% of all cows showed high activity only during 1 session, 33.5% during 2 sessions and only 4.0% during 3 or more sessions. Significantly ($P \leq 0.004$) more cows conceived when inseminated 2 or 3 sessions after detection of high activity (33.9% and 31.2%, respectively) compared to cows inseminated in the session immediately following the high activity detection (21.1%). Due to the timing at which cows showed high activity (late afternoon and early evening) and the daily insemination time (morning), most of the pregnant cows (51.4%) had conceived when inseminated 2 sessions after high activity was detected.

Significance

Cows that are not synchronized will have natural variation in the time at which they start estrus. Given that the average life span of viable sperm is about 12 hours, and that two-thirds of the cows show high activity for only 1 session (approx. 8h), inseminating once per day on natural estrus is likely limiting reproductive performance in many dairy farms. Establishing a second time in the day to inseminate cows that have long estrus cycles or start estrus early in the morning will allow optimal insemination time for most cows.