

Dry Cow Problems: Central States

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I do not have anything radically new or different to offer. I will attempt to share with you some of the ideas and programs we try to accomplish in our practice with dry cow management. Dry cow management has not received the attention as have other areas of the dairy cow practice; consequently, I think the theme for this meeting is very timely.

I would state at the onset that I do not wish to lead you to believe we accomplish these things in all the herds we serve. It would be my wish that, someday, someone will come to this speaker's platform and tell me how to motivate people to try some of the things we are discussing. The problems of client education and motivation are very tough for us to deal with. We have tried every method except physical threats on our clients, and our results are not always rewarding. We certainly need help in this area of our practice. Herd size and problems have outrun the management ability in our area and this also compounds the problem—even more so with dry cow programs because clients are much more receptive to information dealing with production.

It goes without saying that nutrition and mastitis are two very important factors in dry cow management, but much more capable men than I have already covered this, so I will not try to improve on their information.

In the interest of brevity, I will present a dry cow program we are working with and trying to implement. Admittedly, some of this will be elementary, but we feel that programs must be simple, convenient, and easy for the owner to put into action or they will be a failure.

Before Drying Off

The large majority of our herds are totally confined or semiconfined. This changes rather than decreases the problems. It's easy for cows in confinement to dry off carrying too much flesh, so we like to occasionally walk through the herd to get a feel of the overall picture because it will look different to you than to the herdsmen. If animals are too fat, we try to make adjustments. Our people get into more trouble with cows turned dry too fat or an extended dry period, rather than with overfeeding during the dry period. A few minutes spent looking at the entire herd can be of great benefit to all parties concerned.

Dry cow treatment is something we try to encourage in all herds and has been well accepted. We are having some second thoughts about blanket dry cow treatment recommendations because of the oc-

casional severe mastitis cases at freshening. We do not know the entire answer to this, but it seems where we have a mastitis at freshening from herds which have been dry treated, it is usually a lost cow or lost quarter. In herds with good sanitation and low leukocyte counts, we prefer to use quarter cultures for guideline treatment at drying off. This is fairly easy for us due to the presence of a dairy cooperative laboratory available to us and requires little effort on our part.

We recommend injections of Vitamin A and Vitamin E at drying off. Vitamin E has not been recommended that long in our practice; consequently, we are not sure of its significance. In confinement units, many of these cows receive very little exercise and may not walk but a few hundred steps daily. We wonder what effect this may have on muscle tissue over a long period of time. In our opinion, some of the "downer" cows may be related to this problem.

While Dry

A large percentage of our herds are on confinement, as I have previously stated. These animals are on concrete lots and, in many instances, concrete free stalls. We see many lame cows with varying types of foot problems which include: sub-solar abscesses, chronic laminitis, strained tendons, arthritis, overrun soles and infected heels. We are convinced that most of these ailments are primarily a nutritional problem. The etiology of these conditions, from a clinician's standpoint, seems to be due to chronic founder in cows receiving high energy levels. The rear feet are affected more severely; and in trying to get relief, the animals will assume an abnormal stance. This produces strains in the feet and legs which lead to lameness and primary foot disease. During the dry period, we try to get these animals back upon their feet. This can be a great economic benefit to the dairyman. After the animals are completely dried off, we have them brought in to the clinic, put them on the table, and trim the feet as necessary. It is hard, dirty, unpleasant work, but there is no one else to provide this service in our area. If we are to be responsible for the health of a group of animals, this becomes part of practice. After trimming the feet, we place these animals back on dirt, rather than concrete, allow their legs to make adjustments, and, hopefully, return to production sound.

We do minor corrective surgery on the udder while dry, e.g., remove extra teats, repair teat fistulas, wart removal.

Animals should be in a well-drained field and have dry housing if necessary. Our winters normally are mild enough not to need any housing. Most times we discourage housing because it is usually less than desirable.

Parasite Control

Parasite control is an everyday problem for us in practice. We presently try to get the entire herd wormed once yearly with Bay Mix and follow up with individual worming at calving time. This has been reasonably successful. Admittedly this may not be the perfect program, but is the best we can accomplish at this time. External parasite control is a tough area to promote control procedures—lice in winter and flies in summer. We use pour-on preparations for lice control when turning dry.

Two Weeks Before Calving

We encourage the use of close-observation calving lots, but we have been spectacularly unsuccessful at this. If we could institute this one management tool throughout our practice, I am sure it would mean several thousand dollars savings to our clients each year. The close-observation lot allows the implementation of other facets of the dry cow program. I fail to understand client resistance to this recommendation.

We encourage teat dipping at one week prior to calving, but we have not had great success with this recommendation either. Start back on concentrate and silage during this period.

At Delivery

It goes without saying, the udder is of primary importance and should receive immediate attention. We have had so much trouble with cows down on concrete after calving that we presently are encouraging the animal be maintained at least 48 hours on an area where the footing is adequate. We encourage calving outside whenever possible, since we seldom are able to get anyone to maintain an adequate maternity stall. Obstetrics are much too involved to pursue here, but we do have some herdsmen whom we can trust to do obstetrical work under our direction. I might add we also have some herdsmen who try to do obstetrical work not under our direction!

Worming the animals individually at delivery has been well received because it is convenient and easy. By the time the animal goes on the milk line, there are no residue problems.

After Calving

We recommend examining all cows which show obvious discharge, have not dropped the placenta in 72 hours, or had a problem delivery. We still remove some placentas manually when feasible. The use of uterine flushes or volume uterine treatment is something we have gone to 100% in post-calving uterine problems. We like a volume of 500cc in these uteri that need medication after calving. We have used a variety of products but are presently using thiuramide, a homemade furacin mixture, or I₂ is used in pyometra cases.

Thirty Days After Calving

We examine all cows fresh thirty days or more for reproductive tract condition. Surprisingly, this has been well received by many producers. There are some people who will do this rather than a pregnancy exam. If the reproductive tract is sound on this exam, we put the animal into the heat detection system used in the herd. We find approximately 15-20% of these cows need treatment of some type at this time.

Vaccination Programs

We are not using any blanket vaccination recommendation in our dry cow program other than leptospirosis. This disease is common in our area, and we use tri-valent vaccine in most herds. We do have three or four herds we have to add *L. grippo* and/or *L. hardjo*.

Modified live virus vaccines, given when the cow freshens, is a common practice among veterinarians in our section of the state. We have done this, but currently these vaccines are in very limited use in our dry/fresh cow recommendations. If the program is already going, we maintain it.

We use intranasal vaccine predominantly in the dry period for two reasons. One is for protection of the cow and to help combat the calf pneumonia problems.

We have used autogenous salmonella vaccines in some herds, but this is not a common thing for us.

We are not using any mastitis vaccinations at this time.

Questions

1. One of the causes of lameness in dairy herds which are confined or semiconfined is thought to be:
2. Treatment of post parturient uterine problems may be accomplished by:
3. One big problem with implementing dry cow programs is:
4. A reason for not using blanket dry cow treatment recommendations in all dairy herds:
5. The optimum time to start reproduction examinations after calving: