



## Dry Cow Management

It's time to start planning for the next lactation for Spring Calving Herds. There's a temptation to 'milk cows on' given the good milk price but it is important to dry off according to calving dates. Many see the dry period between lactations as a period of 'rest' for the cow but it remains the most critical time to ensure a successful lactation for the following year. The aim is to manage the cow in order to produce a healthy calf, prevent milk fever and associated metabolic disorders around the time of calving and to set the cow up for her next lactation and reproductive cycle.

### How long should the dry period be?

The optimum dry cow period is eight weeks. However, this can vary both between and within herds. Factors influencing the length of the dry period include the following:

- Body condition of cows in late lactation should be monitored. Thin and lame cows need a longer dry period to gain bodyweight and ideally should be grouped separately with a tailored nutritional plan.
- The lactation number should be a point of focus as cows entering their second lactation often fall behind the main herd. Therefore, it's important that they are given time to gain condition if required.
- Cows scanned for multiple births should be dried off for at least 10 to 12 weeks.
- Forage quality and quantity available determines the energy intake and may influence the length of the dry period. We always advise that silage fed to dry cows should be tested for quality and mineral content.

## Managing Body Condition is Key

The most important aspect of dry cow nutrition is to ensure cows are at the correct body condition score (BCS) at calving. A single unit of body condition (1 BCS) is equivalent to approximately 50 kgs liveweight. Check the BCS of the herd now as this is the best opportunity to address issues and ensure cows are in ideal condition before calving season commences. Ninety per cent of the herd should be within the optimal range.

- Target BCS at drying off is between 2.75 and 3.0. Group cows according to condition score if there are a lot of cows outside the optimal range.
- Target BCS at calving is between 3.0 and 3.25 with a slightly higher target of up to 3.50 for in-calf heifers entering the herd.

## Cull Cows

This year, there's been considerable talk about 'Cull Cows' from spring calving dairy herds. The plan will be different for each farm depending on silage available and feed space. Milk price is good and it is tempting to 'milk on culls' but it is futile milking these cull cows to fatten them if you are short of silage!

With an excellent trade for cull cows currently, it may be more prudent to consider selling the culls and keeping valuable silage for the main herd. So farmers should examine the financial implications of having to replace silage that cull cows will consume. If you have sufficient silage to keep the cull cows on the farm, please speak to your Sales Rep for advice on a feed plan to ensure they are finished as quickly as possible.



## Farm Minerals

All housed stock will require minerals to supplement silage. Bretts dairy, beef, weanling and calf feeds are fortified with sufficient minerals if fed at the correct feed rate. When fodder beet, maize silage or wholecrop is fed, additional minerals may be required

### Bretts Bovine Proform Pack

Bretts Bovine Proform Pack is a customised farm mineral suitable for cattle and lactating dairy cows. This high phosphorus mineral also contains Biotin for improved hoof health.

The inclusion of Acid Buf and Actisaf Yeast helps rumen function and makes this mineral an ideal choice for intensive diets and high cereal/fodder beet diets. Customers who have used Brett Bovine Proform report improved dung consistency, improved intake, content animals and very good weight gains or milk yield.

Bretts have a range of farm minerals and mineral buckets available so please discuss requirements with a member of the Ruminant Support team.

## Silage Woes!

It is critical to assess silage quality and also determine if you have sufficient silage available for the livestock you have to feed.



To date, we have completed 30% of our normal silage samples from a range of livestock farms. Unfortunately, initial indications on quality are not good. It is too early to draw any main conclusions but it is fair to say that silages are very dry with an average of over 30% Dry Matter and in many cases the Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) is lower than average. The worrying trend is that there is massive variability within and between farms.

Trace Minerals levels are coming back as low this year and with a lot of soil contamination shown as high ash content and high levels of iron and sulphur which interfere with the availability of minerals that are needed.

Every livestock farm should complete a Fodder Budget to make an accurate assessment of stocks versus demand.

Nationally, there is sufficient fodder but in the Southern region many farms have a deficit and it is important to act now! If you want to calculate the amount of silage available against stock requirements contact any member of the Bretts team.

## Product Focus

### Brett's PIP Dry Cow Minerals

Bretts PIP Dry Cow Minerals are renowned for consistent performance. They are specifically formulated to meet the requirements of the dry cow, taking into consideration that silages are generally low in copper, selenium and iodine.

The PIP Dry Cow mineral is fortified with high levels of Vitamin E which boosts immunity and Vitamin D3 which helps calcium regulation and the prevention of milk fever at calving. The incidence of problems such as retained afterbirth, milk fever, stillborn calves can be reduced greatly if cows receive appropriate dry cow nutrition.

It is essential that minerals are fed to ensure all cows get the correct amount so if feeding space is limited, we suggest feeding minerals twice per day.

This year, trace mineral levels in many silage samples are low. We advise a minimum period of six weeks for all cows and ensure that feed levels are correct. For a cow calving on January 12th, that means she needs to be fed dry cow minerals from December 1st.



## SPECIAL OFFER

Order Brett's Dry Cow Minerals early to avail of our Special Offer!

Every 1 ton pallet ordered for delivery in November, will receive 2 FREE Bags of PIP Dry Cow Minerals.

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Callan, Co. Kilkenny  
Tel: 056 7755300

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Windgap, Co. Kilkenny  
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