

KEEP DRY THIS WINTER

Season to Date:

So far this season is proving to be a good one for growing grass. Rainfall has been broken up with days of fine weather and temperatures haven't dropped down to extremes, with the exclusion of a few overnight lows during the month. The LER has sped up by a day or so from the beginning of the month for the SW.

Leaf Emergence Rates (LER) week 4 June (Based on current max and min air temperatures)			
Serpentine	Bunbury	Margaret River	Albany
14.6	12.7	12.7	12.9

Drying Off Strategies:

At the end of lactation dairy cows require a dry period to allow udder tissue to repair and rejuvenate. If the length of the dry cow period is not long enough, or cows are not dried off, the next lactation yield is significantly decreased. As well as allowing the udder to regenerate, an effective drying off strategy should achieve 2 things for your herd:

- Cure all cows that were subclinically infected during lactation; and
- Protect all cows from infection over the dry cow period until the time of calving.

If you're finding you generally have a high clinical mastitis count at calving, this could indicate a weakness in your dry cow therapy strategy. The national target for clinical cases of mastitis in the first 30 days post calving is less than 5 cases/100 cows calved.

Your drying off strategy shouldn't begin on the day your planning to start drying off. Some prior planning is required to ensure cows are effectively dried off and will remain infection free for the dry period.

Areas to focus on are:

- Aim to have cows producing below 12 litres/day at time of dry off. If cows are above this it is recommended to decrease concentrate feeds, this is often more effective than once-a-day milking. In high producing cows aim to begin reducing supplementary and concentrate feeds 1-2 week prior to dry off. This will require some adjustments to the ration to ensure energy requirements for a 7-8 month pregnant cow are still met. Management changes such as grazing cows in different mobs or unfamiliar paddocks, altering routines etc. are also proven to be effective for accelerating dry off.
- *Strep uberis* is a major mastitis causing bacteria, and it can enter the cow's udder while the teat canal is still closing following drying off (it can take up to 3-4 days for complete closure of the teat canal when teat sealant is not used). In addition to using an antibiotic dry cow treatment, a teat sealant can also be used to ensure the teat canal remains closed for the duration of the dry period.
- Ensuring cows are fully milked out before treating with dry cow and/or teat sealant. Teat sealant should be applied after dry cow, but do not massage the udder after application, teat sealant needs to remain in the lower teat canal to be effective. It is advised to allow cows to stand for 2-3 minutes after teat sealing.
- Ensure cows are thoroughly sprayed with teat disinfectant following milking and treatment.
- In the immediate 2 hours following dry cow treatment/teat sealant try not to allow cows to lie down on bare ground or areas soiled with manure, avoid wet boggy laneways and transporting where possible.
- Aim for a dry period of 6-8 weeks.
- For herds where maiden heifers are becoming infected, the use of teat sealants alone in the 2-8 weeks leading up to calving can markedly reduce the incidence of clinical mastitis post calving.

Expression of interest open for a **Cups on Cups Off Course in Busselton and a **Transition Cow Management Course**, both in July, please email: Jessica@westerndairy.com.au



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