

DairyNZ Seasonal Diary

Late lactation to dry off check list – setting up for next season

Pasture and cow condition

- Complete autumn/winter feed budget to set targets for average pasture cover (APC), cow condition and supplements
- Continue to monitor APC and cow condition against targets
- Monitor post-grazing residuals, try and avoid over-grazing. That is grazing lower than 1400 kg DM/ha (6 clicks), especially new pastures
- Dispose of known culls before starting to feed out supplements
- Consider OAD to reduce feed demand and protect young, thin cows
- Target pasture cover at dry off iskgDM/ha

For more information on feed budgeting and wastage of supplement use the DairyNZ feed information poster.

Drying off time based on condition score

Days from calving	Condition Score	
	Cow	Rising 3 year old
120	3.0	3.5
90	3.5	4.0
60	4.0	5.0
Calving	5.0	5.5

Note: Cows do not gain BCS during their final month of pregnancy.



Condition score 3 *



Condition score 4 *

Cow condition	Date I will dry cows off
Heifers under condition score 3	
Cows under condition score 3	
Heifers under condition score 3.5	
Cows under condition score 3.5	
Heifers under condition score 4	

* Images from the DairyNZ Condition Scoring Made Easy Guide.

Pasture renewal

- Have a planned programme for pasture renewal
- Correct paddock limitations first e.g. fertility and drainage
- Calculate the return from pasture renewal Visit dairynz.co.nz/publicationsandtools - production and feeding pasture renewal calculator
- Plan to fill any feed gaps arising from pasture renewal e.g. supplements, nitrogen, cull early
- Aim to have new pasture sown by early March
- Select the right endophyte e.g. AR37 for black beetle protection
- Select the right cultivar e.g. late vs. early flowering
- Don't mix cultivars with different flowering dates.

Supplements

- Use supplements to extend rotation and/or increase days in milk
- Avoid wasting pasture (i.e. maintain grazing residuals at 1500-1600kgDM/ha)
- Use the supplement response rate table to estimate milksolids response
- As a rule of thumb pay no more than 5% of payout for supplements (in the stack). This is based on top pasture and supplement management to get a response of 70-80g MS/kg DM offered
- To calculate the marginal return include all costs e.g. time (extra relief milkings), vehicle running and depreciation, shed expenses etc. Refer to DairyNZ Farmfact 1-56
- Minimise wastage of supplement at the stack, loading the wagon and feeding out (staff training)
- Surplus supplement able to be fed summer

Autumn response to supplement offered

Response to feed offered		Residuals and average pasture cover (APC)	Supplement	Other
g/kg DM	g/MJME			
-ve - 30	-ve - 3.0	Leaving 9.5 clicks plus (1800kg DM/ha; at or above APC	Quality<10.5 ME; Wastage 30% plus (fed in wet weather; poor stack mgt)	Lactation not extended i.e. no increase in day in milk (DIM per ha; loss pasture quality)
40 - 50	3.5 - 4.5	8.0-9.5 clicks (1600-1800 kg DM/ha); stop feeding at target APC	Average quality 10.0-10.5 ME; Wastage 25% - 30%	DIM/ha unchanged; rotation length not slowed to build cover; residuals too high
60 - 70	5.5 - 6.5	7.0-7.5 clicks (1500-1550kg DM/ha) residuals	Good quality 10.5 - 11.0 ME; Wastage 20% or less	Rotation length slowed and increase in DIM/ha; cow condition and APC at calving targets met
80 - 90	7.0 - 8.0	Residuals < 6 clicks (1350 kg DM/ha) if no supplement fed; Residuals 7 clicks (1500 kg DM/ha); APC well below target	Good quality 10.8 + ME; Low wastage 15% or less (feeding maize or PKE in bins/ on feed pad)	If supplement not fed cows dried off - significant increase DIM/ha. Cow condition and cover targets achieved

Animal health

- Monitor facial eczema spore levels and administer zinc to stock
- Liver biopsy on cows to check copper and selenium levels
- Supplement with minerals as needed
- Check teat spray coverage – make sure all teats being covered at every milking
- Continue monitoring for and treating mastitis
- If bulk tank SCC rising, dry off early those cows with high SCC and/or low BCS
- Book in consultation with vet to review DCT and pre-calving options
- Identify mastitis culls from clinical and herd test data records.

Reproduction

- Get your InCalf Fertility Focus Report and review reproductive performance. What is your 6-week in-calf rate and empty rate?
- Seek advice from an InCalf adviser if reproductive performance is below average, as indicated by "one star" on Fertility Focus Report
- Develop a strategy with your advisers to start to close performance gaps in key management areas, and to manage risks to maintaining good performance
- Use your pregnancy test results to plan the next calving pattern and to budget winter feed requirements. Consult your vet early if planning to induce cows
- Prepare a culling list and remove known culls from the herd early to improve feed supply for cows that are staying
- Establish drying off decision rules for your herd that includes body condition and days to next calving, so that most cows calve at condition score 5.0 to 5.5
- Monitor abortion rates and seek veterinary advice if the herd rate is excessive.

Contact details for your local InCalf Advisor can be found at dairynz.co.nz/incalf

Environment

- Speak to your fertiliser representative or consultant about updating your nutrient budget
- Take time to maintain any riparian margin on your property, spray weeds. Replant if required. Check electric fences are operating
- Know the application rate and depth you are applying effluent
- Test your effluent and work out what nutrients you are applying per application
- Plan to have your effluent storage pond empty before winter
- Do any maintenance necessary on your effluent system (irrigators, ponds, pumps etc).

People

- Review the season to date: celebrate success and consider improvements
- Conduct performance appraisals
- Plan and discuss late lactation/dry-off activities with staff
- Review and set training plans for 2010/11
- Build in some personal and professional development plans
- Talk to staff about their plans for 2010/11 – how will this impact on your team?
- Work through Career Pathways with existing staff
- Build Career Pathways into your recruitment process for new staff
- Discuss holiday plans with staff
- Consider and plan for any relief staff requirements for the months ahead.

Remember - All staff management processes should include all permanent and casual staff. Consistent messages for all involved benefits your farm business.

Business

- Update your monthly cashflow budgets
- Reflect on the current season budget – compare your forecasts with actual. Identify changes for the 2010/11 budget
- Consider your cash position for year end. Will you have a surplus to re-invest? Pay off debt?
- Prepare your annual cash and monthly cashflow budgets for 2010/11 with your best prediction of payout, costs and production for the season
- Discuss your budget predictions with farm partners, your banker and accountants and get feedback from them
- If you improved your cost structure when payout was \$4.50, try and hold on to this structure. Utilise the extra payout in wealth creating areas i.e. debt reduction or investments
- Start planning your working capital (overdraft) requirements for 2010/11
- Keep your accounts up to date and ready for your accountant if you have a March balance date
- 2008/09 accounts should be completed so consider asking your accountant to enter them into DairyBase. If you are not sure where to start with DairyBase call your local DairyNZ Consulting Officer for an overview
- If you have DairyBase use it to identify areas for improvement and take action
- Discuss taxation planning with your accountant
- Spend time with your partner / business partners clarifying what your goals are for the next five years and how you will achieve them. Book in the babysitters and have a weekend away to combine leisure and planning time
- Register for the DairyNZ Mark and Measure courses/Industry conferences
- Review contracts, e.g. winter grazing.

Compliance

- Check all employee records are up to date
- Review your health and safety policies with staff. What has worked well and what needs improving?
- Work through the Animal Health and Welfare section of the DairyNZ Compliance Toolkit: dairynz.co.nz/compliancetoolkit

Useful DairyNZ tools

- Budgeting templates: dairynz.co.nz/budgets
- Compliance Toolkit: dairynz.co.nz/compliancetoolkit
- HR Toolkit
- Career Pathways
- Feed Information Poster
- Feed wedge calculator
- Autumn/winter feed budget
- Farmfacts: dairynz.co.nz/farmfacts
- Tight Management tools: dairynz.co.nz/tightmanagement

Order your copy by calling the DairyNZ Farmer Information Service or visiting the publications and tools order form on www.dairynz.co.nz

For more information on each activity visit dairynz.co.nz or contact the farmer information service 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969)