**Getting calves off to a good start**

**Calving**
- Check springer mob regularly – at least twice every 24 hours. Preferably, every six hours.
- Supplement cows with magnesium to reduce risk of milk fever and grass staggers.
- Calve cows in a well-draining paddock that is not puddled or muddy. Do not allow calves to puddle in a paddock for springers.
- Have a plan for managing down cows:
  - make sure cows down for longer than 48 hours receive veterinary attention (or are humanely destroyed)
  - provide down cows with shelter in poor weather conditions
  - use hip clamps carefully and discontinuine use if there is no progress or the cow cannot promptly support her own weight.
- If in an area where ticks are present or theileria has been diagnosed, closely monitor the springer mob and freshly calved cows for anaemia, and seek veterinary advice if signs of anaemia are present. A F-A-N-I card can help – dairy.nz/theileria

**Newborn calves**
- Promptly destroy prematurity/deformed calves.
- Ensure newborn calves receive at least 2-4 litres of colostrum (12% of body weight), preferably within the first six hours of life.
- Allobby calves should be individually assessed for fitness to transport.

**Weaning calves**
To wean calves successfully on to pasture:
- Weren’t at target weights (depending on rearing system used)
- Keep feeding meal once calves are on pasture (Q 24f of meal daily, reducing over the next few months)
- Check weights after a few weeks
- Undertake faecal egg counts to monitor parasite levels
- Vaccinate.

**Preventing, finding, treating mastitis**

**Prevent**
- Treat spraying dry cows 2-3 times per week before calving, or removing calves from the first 10-12 hours after calving, helps reduce mastitis.
- Treat spray after every milking. Add extra emulsion until the weather improves and the risk of teat skin damage reduces.
- Ensure all cows are milking out completely, before leaving the colostrum mob.

**Find and treat**
- Strip all quarters and check for clinical signs at each milking. Check cows using the Rapid Mastitis Test before they leave the colostrum herd, to identify high SCC cows. Retain positive cows in the colostrum herd for 2-44 hours before re-check.
- Record details and treat only clinical cases.
- Strip all cows for clinical signs at least weekly during the first 6-8 weeks of the season. Split the task over two or more milkings to spread the load.
- Make sure that cows treated for mastitis are milked last.

**Tips for more on calving rearing, see the DairyNZ Technical Series (June 2018), the Dairy NZ Calendar Guide or Dairy NZ Farmfact: Calving (5-20).**

**Stay on top of business management**
- Keep accounts, bills and paperwork in order. It’s easy to let things pile up when you’re in the thick of calving, but having a filing and payment system can reduce the stress and time spent chasing late bills and payments and accounts.
- Code accounts as they come in, it will make the transition to your accounting software or accountant a lot easier.
- Monitor the budget by tracking actual spending and income. Keep on top of working capital so you don’t get any nasty surprises.
- Get your Dairybase reports back from your accountant. Use these to reflect on how you sit against benchmarks – is there room for further refinement of your budget this season? Which advisors should you discuss your reports with?

**Setting up for mating**
Refer to the DairyNZ InCalf Book (pg 9-10) for ‘Actions and options at each stage of the fertility cycle’.

**Pre-mating**
- Invest in heat detection training using a combination of paddock observation and heat detection aids.
- Compare pre-mating heat activity with the BSM target. Identify factors causing non-cycling (DairyNZ InCalf Book, pg 59). Consider early treatment options if not on track.
- Assess herd body condition score (BCS) profile 2 weeks pre-mating and measure percentage of cows below BCS four target is no more than 15% – see the DairyNZ InCalf Book, pg 60.

**Mating**
- Track progress daily and weekly towards three-week submission rate targets. Poor results mean either poor heat detection or excessive non-cycling, or combinations of both.
- Manage working bulls (DairyNZ InCalf Book, pg 125) to maximise overall in-calf rate. Remove all bulls as planned.

**Managing effluent application**
- Optimise soil fertility by staying in the target ranges and only applying fertiliser or lime if necessary to keep them there. Utilise your nutrient budget when updating the fertiliser recommendation. Discuss with your nutrient management advisor.
- Be proactive when grazing wet soils, to prevent pasture and soil damage. If using on-going grazing, ensure all effluent is contained and managed.
- Measure the application depth your effluent applicator is applying. Adjust to avoid ponding, run-off and contamination of surface or sub-surface water.
- Aim to keep effluent in the root zone.
- Make sure the application depth meets consent or permitted activity conditions.
- Walk the whole effluent system to check for any faults or damage in the system. Repair any faults immediately.
- Look for opportunities to reduce water use around the farm dairy, such as checking for leaks. Check out the Smart Water Use resources on dairy.co.nz/smartwateruse.

**Team priorities for coming months**
- Have a team debrief post-calving and take time to consider:
  - What went well? What areas can you all improve on?
  - What challenges did you face and what changes are required on farm for next season?
- Start talking about public holidays, summer holidays and leave plans.
- Consider how labour worked, Christmas and any other public holidays will be covered and your legal obligations regarding payment and time in lieu.
- Ask your team about their leave plans and outline your expectations for covering leave. Then, arrange a relief milker.
- If managing the holiday season with a skeleton team, decide who will be back-up if something goes wrong.
- Prepare for mating.
  - Work with your team to create a plan, discuss why tasks are important and how they fit in, i.e. your expectations of them. Ensure they understand what good looks like.
  - Set up six-monthly performance reviews.
  - Performance reviews should not be the only time you catch up with staff. Have regular meetings to discuss expectations to keep staff on track.
  - Set clearly defined objectives for all staff, so they know what is expected of them. Objectives also help staff prioritise.
- Training.
  - Identify training requirements for staff and, together, create a training plan.
  - Allocate time for on-farm and off-farm training and make it happen.

**Tips**
- Take action on the issues and opportunities identified from the DairyNZ Farm Enviro Walk and the DairyNZ Compliance Checklist (dairynz.co.nz/checklists).
- Order your copy of the DairyNZ Dry Summer Management Guide and Summer Action Plan from the DairyNZ Farmer Information Service, ph 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 4 324 7969) or download from dairynz.co.nz.