2-5 Planned mating management

Your herds calving pattern is one of the most important factors affecting milksolids production on your farm. A concentrated calving pattern can increase production for the season by up to 3500 kg milksolids in a 200 cow herd.

This is because a concentrated calving pattern increases the number of days in milk before Christmas. For every extra day in milk before Christmas, production per cow over the whole season is increased by 1.2 to 1.8 kg milksolids.

A concentrated calving pattern also:

- Gives more time for all cows to cycle before the start of mating reducing the cost of treating non cycling cows.
- Increases the potential number of AB bred high BW heifer calves. This also makes calf rearing easier because the required number of replacement heifer calves are all born within 3 to 4 weeks of the start of calving.

A concentrated calving pattern next season starts with a good mating management programme this season.

Mating targets

- 95% of the herd should be submitted for mating at least once within four weeks of the start of mating.
- 100% of the herd should be submitted for mating at least once within 7 weeks of the start of mating.
- 90% of the herd should be in calf 7 weeks after the start of mating.

Good heat detection is essential (see FarmFact 2-6).

Mating programme

To achieve the above targets:

- Calve cows in condition score 5.
- Grow young stock to recommended liveweights.
- Ensure your herd is in good health. If unsure contact your local Vet.
- Tail paint the herd 4 weeks before the start of mating (see FarmFact 2-7).
- Have your vet check non-cycling cows one week before the planned start of mating. Treat non-cyclers if necessary.
- If you are naturally mating heifers Vet check bull fertility one week before the planned start of mating. Run one bull per 15 heifers. Never use just one bull.
- Re-tail paint the herd at the start of mating with a different colour.
- Record all matings in the yellow notebook and on a mating management chart.
- Re-tail paint cows mated that day at the next milking. Use a different colour when repainting. Unmated cows are then easier to identify.
- Vet check non-cycling cows again 3 weeks after the start of mating. Have your vet check follow up bulls for fertility.
• The follow up bulls should run with the herd for 6 - 9 weeks after the end of AB. One bull is required for every 30 cows not in calf (2 to 3 bulls are usually sufficient for a 200 cow herd).

• Pregnancy test 6 weeks after the bulls have been removed from the herd. Empty cows can then be culled if you are faced with a summer feed shortage.

If you employ labour, explain the importance of heat detection. Make sure they know what to look for.

Make sure you have suitable insemination facilities in your shed. Poor facilities can lower conception rates by up to 10%.