2-7 Tail painting

Why tail paint?

- Accurate heat detection is essential. Correct use of tail painting identifies almost 90% of cows on heat.
- Tail painting picks up cows which are only on heat for a short time and would otherwise be missed.
- Every missed heat costs an average 25kg Milksolids (14.7kg Milkfat) in lost production alone (21 days x 1.2kg Milksolids = 25kg Milksolids).

How to tail paint

- Use commercially available specifically formulated products (roof paint may not rub off properly, water-based paints won’t last).
- Apply paint to cover those points near the head of the tail which will be rubbed off by the brisket of the riding cow.
- A strip about 60mm wide and 150mm long (2” x 6”), painted along the ridge of the backbone immediately above the tail will do the job.
- Remove loose hair and dirt before applying tail paint. Don’t apply paint too thickly.
- Check the paint strip each milking. In 90% of cases, most of the paint will be rubbed off when a cow is on heat. A further 5% of cows will lose some paint, and with the remaining 5% confusion can occur so experience in reading tail paint is needed for these cows. Paint is rarely removed by occasional mounting of cows not on heat in the yard or race.
- Cows detected on heat and then inseminated should not be repainted until the following milking. Use a different colour when re-painting inseminated cows. Unmated cows are then easier to identify.
- Tail paint should last four weeks unless the coat hair becomes loose with shedding. Touch ups with brush or aerosol tail paint are required if this happens.

When to use tail paint

- In the three weeks before mating, tail paint can be used to identify non-cyclers early and help identify pre-mating heats.
- During mating to identify cows to be mated.
- After AB has finished and the bull is used, so calving dates can then be predicted for later cows.