

Newsletter June 2020

Talking Bull– Tom Crosby

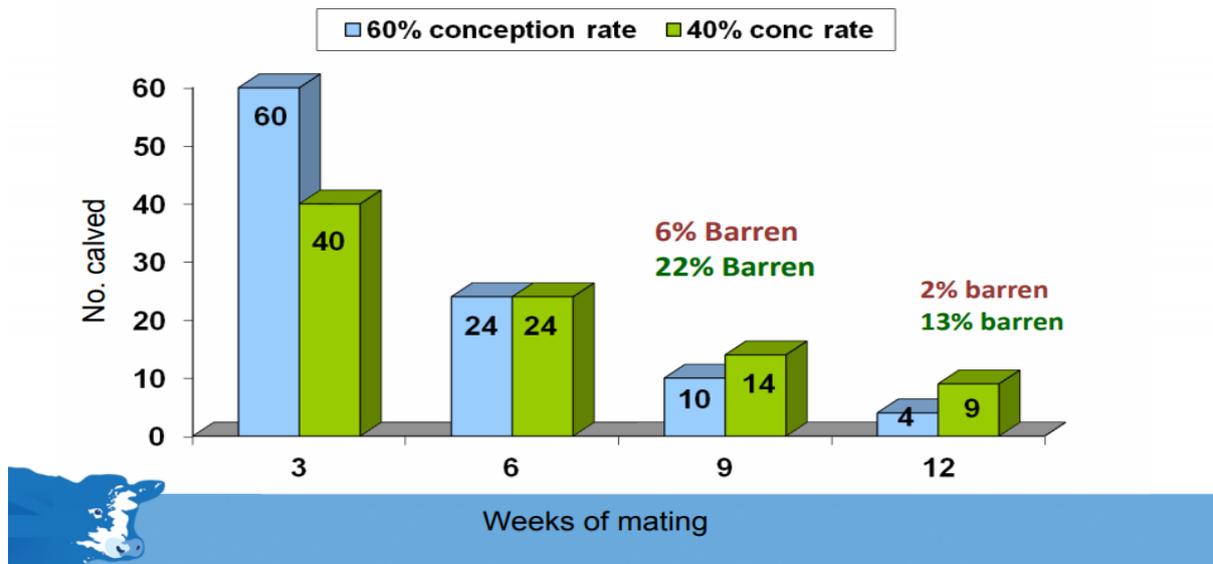
Whether you are a beef farmer or a dairy farmer; block calving or all year round, it is very important that you get your bull tested once a year. Consider it an MOT for your bull! The test is called a Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) and is used to evaluate a bull’s fertility. Why?



Unless the bull has an obvious physical ailment that is stopping it from being able to serve cows (lame, sick, etc.) it is impossible to determine his fertility just by looking at him. Being fertile the previous year does not guarantee that he will be fertile the following year.

Various studies have consistently shown that between 20 – 25% of bulls that undergo routine breeding soundness tests are found to be subfertile or infertile (Penny 2010).

Infertility is rare but subfertility is far more common; these bulls are still able to serve and impregnate cows, but they are not achieving a conception rate equal to a fertile bull. These subfertile bulls are often hard to discover without a BBSE, particularly if the farm runs more than one bull, as the other bulls will continue to serve the cows and effectively ‘cover up’ the subfertile bull’s shortcomings. Poor fertility figures, a poor conception rate or a spread-out block calving pattern are all outcomes of using a subfertile bull. These subfertile bulls will typically achieve a 40% conception rate, whereas a fertile bull will achieve at least 60%.



This figure shows the direct effect a subfertile bull would have on a herd of 100 cows. A subfertile bull would give you a 13% barren rate after 12 weeks, whereas a fertile bull should give you 2%. The calving pattern is also more spread out. A target of >65% of cows calving in the 1st 3 weeks of the start of calving is achieved in herds with good fertility in cows and bulls, with a target of a barren rate of <5%.

Focus on calf health– David Taylor

Calf scour is the leading illness in calves less than a month old but much confusion remains about how to best treat this costly illness. Some basic rules that can be applied almost no matter the cause.

- 1) Do not withhold milk, calves need energy and they cannot get enough from “oral rehydration therapy” (ORT) powders or gels.
- 2) Do not add ORT products to milk, no matter what it says on the instructions. Milk already contains salts and adding ORT powders/gels can lead to the guts shutting down.
- 3) Give ORT and milk at 2 hour intervals, so calves can digest milk and the guts aren't overloaded.
- 4) As a general rule, worry more that you use ORT early, and plenty of it, than what product you use.
- 5) We generally underestimate the amount of fluids a calf needs. A 40Kg calf that is 7% dehydrated (mild depression, 2 second skin “tenting”, and marginally sunken eyes (2-4mm)) needs the normal 4l daily requirement, 3l to correct the dehydration and 2l to replace losses from scouring. If fed 5l of milk, then they will need just short of 5 litres of ORT on day 1. Remember that milk is 11-15% “food” and not just fluids. **All** calves need constant access to clean, fresh water— it is the law. 4 litres of milk is only enough fluid for the first 2-3 days of life for a 40kg calf.
- 6) Use Metacam, a proven help in treating scours. Antibiotics are only indicated if calves are less than a week old or may have had insufficient colostrum or are depressed.
- 7) Get a diagnosis!!!! Please speak to your routine vet or ring one of the offices for further info.



Coronavirus update:

Thank you helping us to keep working safely during the pandemic. Please remember:

- The offices are closed to the public including clients.
- Phone us to pre-order all medicines
- Collection is outside the offices
- Please do not visit the office to book visits or ask for advice. **We are always happy to speak to you over the phone.**

Thank you.



Your local farm veterinary service

North Petherton

Unit 8 Sedgemoor Auction Centre
Market Way North Petherton
Somerset, TA6 6DF
t: 01278 663399

Yarcombe

Stopgate Cross
Yarcombe, Honiton
Devon, EX14 9NB
t: 01404 861214

Ilminster

5 Larchfield Industrial Estate
Dowlsh Ford, Ilminster
Somerset, TA19 0PF
t:01460 55004