
FERTILITY

Whether you're a dairyman or a beef suckler unit then much of the profitability hangs around the production of one calve per cow per year.

On the dairy side, the figure of £2.07 for every day extending beyond the magic 365 days is still applicable. With NMR records showing the national average slipping towards 425 days then the potential profit lost to the industry is huge! (on average £120 per cow/year). It's often questioned whether extended lactations really do lose money, but remember a cows lactation curve is exactly that- a curve. So- the most money is made by achieving the most peak lactations within lifetime.

On the beef side, with loss of subsidies, EBLEX figures indicate that the suckler cows are making an annual loss of between £75 and £425! Another way to consider it is the conservative estimate of wintering costs of £250 per cow. Obviously the only way to minimise losses is to ensure that there are no 'passengers' and wherever possible all cows are carrying and producing 1 calf per year.

So where does the vet come in?

Well it's difficult for us to actually get your cows pregnant! But we can help you monitor the situation closely to allow timely intervention should a problem arise.

Dairy

Setting parameters for all cows is vital. Regular fertility visits will allow us to-

- Identify cows with post calving problems and treat early.
- Examine and treat cows not seen bulling by the end of their 'voluntary waiting period', usually 50 days.
- PD cows from 30 days post service to allow rapid identification of PD -ve cows, and ensure they return to the heat observation list.

The key is early, proactive involvement. Examining a cow not seen bulling by 150 days calved is a potential financial disaster, finding a cow with 'whites' at 200 days calved is even worse! So, whilst we appreciate there is a cost involved, prevention of even greater losses is the aim.

Beef

The key with our involvement with suckler cow production and fertility takes two main forms.

- o Ensuring the bull is indeed fertile prior to introduction to cows. With a national subfertility incidence of 20% it is vital that we have confidence in his abilities. In fact bulls often 'become' sub-fertile between or during mating seasons so it is vital that we check his status before re-introduction to a new group. The target is 90% pregnancy rate in 50 cows over an 8 week breeding period!
- o Early PD sessions (10 weeks after bull introduction) to identify which cows have still not 'held' to fall into the proposed calving season. These cows can then be examined in more detail and decisions about their future agreed on.

Whilst this involves less time than spent on dairy units it is every bit as vital to maintain profitability on the unit and should not be considered an afterthought or a job for a quiet day- make sure it's a priority.