

# DAIRY NEWSLETTER— JULY 2008

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## REMEMBER YOUR DRY COWS THIS SUMMER

With much of the focus on heat stress in the milking herd, dry cows are easily overlooked. Cooling of lactating cows should be the top priority, but dry cows also need some special attention during hot weather. As in lactating cows, heat stress causes dry cows to eat less. Reduced feed intake, along with the energy the cows expend to cool themselves, can magnify a negative energy balance prior to calving. This is especially important in close-up dry cows, since feed consumption drops before calving. Research has shown that a negative energy balance before calving can increase the likelihood of retained placenta and metritis after calving. Heat stressed dry cows also have calves with low birth weights, which can lead to reduced milk production in the following lactation. It has been found that cows whose last 3 months of gestation were during hot weather had smaller calves, experienced more metabolic problems after calving, and produced 12% less milk in the next lactation. A good location to focus on cooling dry cows is the feeding area. Cooling these areas helps to increase feed intake, which ensures that cows are getting adequate energy for calf development. There should be constant access to a fresh water source. Dry cows should also have access to some type of shade, either natural or artificial. If you are using an artificial shade structure be sure to have enough space for all cows. Fans and sprinklers are effective, but they require electricity, so they may not be feasible on all farms. Heat abatement techniques don't have to be fancy, as long as they work. Remember your dry cows this summer and take the steps needed to cool them off so you can avoid potential problems in the future.

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# NORTH CAROLINA DAIRY SECURITY MEETINGS

The NC Dairy Security Committee has spent over six years working on security procedures to deal with foreign animal diseases (FAD). The USDA has a plan to deal with infected farms after an outbreak occurs, but the NC Dairy Security Committee believes this plan is not adequate for the continuation of our dairy industry. Therefore, the NC Committee has developed a plan to get the state's dairy industry operating again as quickly as possible after a FAD outbreak. The plan focuses on actions that will promote business continuity for the industry, and it has received interest and support from some of the major dairy states. All NC dairy producers will be receiving an invitation to an informational meeting to learn about NC's plan. At the meeting you will learn how you can be prepared for a FAD outbreak and what you would be expected to do in that situation. A FAD outbreak is certainly not something that producers like to think about, but it is important to be informed in case this situation were to arise. I encourage you to attend one of the meetings listed below. All meetings will be from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, with lunch provided.

- Tuesday, July 8 at the Mountain Research Station in Fletcher, NC
- Wednesday, July 9 at the BoxCar Grille in Statesville, NC
- Thursday, July 10 at the Guilford County Extension Center in Greensboro, NC



## Coming Events

- July 17: Pasture-based Dairy Workshop; Goldsboro; 9:30 am-3:30 pm
- July 18: NC Dairy Youth Foundation Golf Tournament; Sophia, NC
- July 19: NC/VA Jersey Field Day; Huffard Dairy Farm; Crockett, Va.
- August 8: NC Junior Dairy Day; Rowan County Fairgrounds; 9:30 am –3:30 pm
- August 23: NW District Dairy Show; Alleghany County Fairgrounds



# HOT WEATHER NUTRITION TIPS

Digestion creates a lot of heat, so cows eat less during hot weather, which leads to decreased milk production. Here are some ways to help boost intake levels:

- **Maintain minimum effective fiber levels:** High fiber rations generate heat, so producers may be tempted to cut fiber levels. However, low fiber rations can result in acidosis. Effective fiber will keep the rumen functioning properly, so feed a sufficient percentage of fiber with an adequate chop length for good roughage value.
- **Use high quality ingredients:** If the ration is not palatable cows won't consume as much. Periods of hot weather are the best time to use high quality ingredients to increase intake. The cost of the ingredients may be worth it if it keeps milk production from falling.
- **Add fat to the ration:** Supplemental fat will increase the energy density of a ration, but if the total percentage of fat in the diet exceeds 6%, fiber digestion and dry matter intake may decrease.
- **Consider adding buffers:** Buffers, such as sodium bicarbonate, at amounts of 0.33 to 0.5 lb per cow per day will help prevent acidosis, maintain electrolyte balance, and ultimately increase intake.
- **Feed the right amount of protein:** Overfeeding protein shifts energy from milk production to excretion of excess nitrogen. Generally, rations should be 18% protein or less on a dry matter basis. Rations that have more than 65% of the total protein as rumen degradable protein should be avoided because the excess nitrogen produced must be excreted by the kidneys, which takes energy. Each farm is unique, so evaluate the protein level for your herd based on your situation and feed ingredients and consider changing the ration if the protein level is out of balance.

Remember to provide plenty of fresh water, since water intake can double during hot weather. Allow about 10 feet of water trough perimeter for every 75 to 100 cows to ensure that all cows have access to water. You may also be able to increase intake by feeding more frequently, keeping feed pushed up, making sure bunks are clean, cooling feeding areas, and making the bulk of the feed available early in the morning and late in the day. This information was adapted from an article by Dr. Lon Whitlow at NCSU.

