



# DN NEWSLETTER

## issue 15

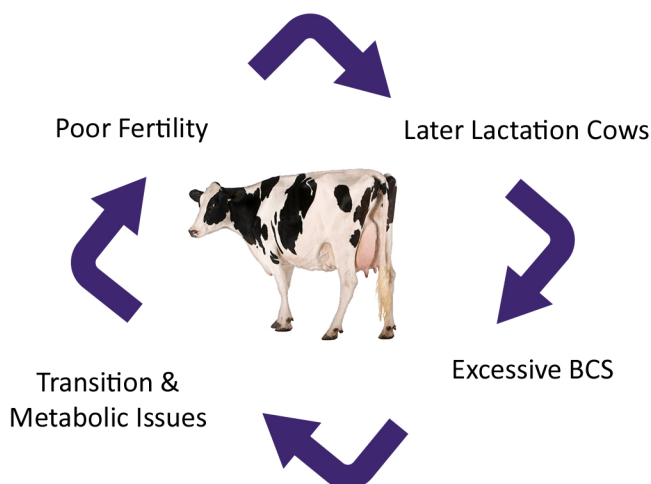
Cattle fertility has a huge impact on a farming business and is often impacted by other issues on farm. Autumn calving dairy herds are starting to serve cows and suckler cows are being housed and scanned, now is the time to think about fertility before the issue occurs.

### Fertility - The Foundation of Any Herd

As grass quality starts to decline and heifers and some dry cows are often still out at grass, future fertility needs to be thought about. It can often be seen in December and January, that fertility eases. This is often because the dry cows or heifers were kept out too late and did not receive a full, satisfactory transition period, forgetting how crucial this period is to future performance and fertility.

Fertility and reproductive performance are the foundation to any herd success regardless of the production system employed. Poor fertility is often referred to as the “silent robber” due to its huge financial impact upon businesses.

The potential impact upon a business from poor fertility is not only damaging financially, it also has a long-term effect upon the herd that may take months and often years to recover from, something which could in some instances leave the business unable to continue. Herds with poorer fertility tend to have later lactation cows in excessive body condition, which then increases the risk of transition and metabolic issues, this then increases the risk for poorer fertility in the next lactation and creates an ever exacerbating cycle.

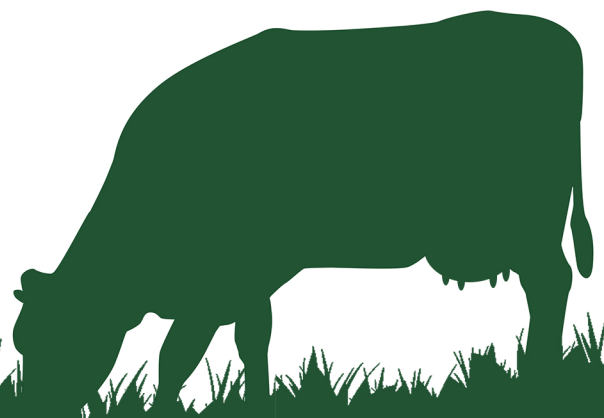


Poor reproductive performance can be the result of many different factors, including, but not restricted to, inadequate nutrition of both the milking herd and dry cows resulting in poor transition from the dry period to lactation.

Mineral deficiencies, issues due to lameness, heat stress and disease pressures can all contribute at different times of the year so it is important to work with your nutritionist, vet and breeding technician to ensure any issues are addressed before they become a problem. Working with a unified approach can also help to pinpoint potential problems before they manifest themselves.

Setting targets and assessing performance are key tools that can help to keep fertility on track. Regular body condition scoring is a useful tool that helps monitor cows at varying stages of lactation, with target BCS at drying off of 2.5-3 this is a useful place to start.

If large numbers of cows are reaching the end of lactation above or below this level then late lactation diets may need adjusting, or it may indicate a previous issue with fertility in the herd. It also allows you to track changes in BCS through the dry period and into the next lactation, enabling early identification of early lactation condition loss and energy deficit which will increase the risk of poorer fertility going forward.





### Autumn Calving Herds & Suckler Herds:

Autumn calving dairy and suckler herds also need to be considering fertility now as they are calving. As these cows are targeting a tight calving period the service period also needs to be tight. Body condition score and nutrition are key to achieving the required results.

Almost everything you do with management of cattle on farm can affect reproductive performance in some way and there are very few days in the year when you can't influence this in some way.

### Key Fertility Management Areas

There are key areas of fertility management that must be successfully achieved for good reproductive performance. These areas include:

- Calf and heifer management and growth
- Body condition
- Prevention of lameness and disease
- Nutrition of animals at all stages
- Correct mineral supplementation
- Heat detection
- Sire selection
- AI practices
- Bull management
- Management of the cows' environment to minimise the impact of heat stress etc

It's worth reviewing all of the above areas on a regular basis to ensure you are minimising their impact upon animal and herd performance, contact your local DN Sales Specialist for help with doing this, or to discuss any of the above points further.

### Fertility Data & Targets

The table below shows the average key performance indicators for dairy herds in 2019.

Dairy Herd	2019	Your Herd
Calving Interval	400	
Days to First Service	71	
Services per Conception	2.6	
Conception Rate (%)	39	
100 Day in Calf Rate (%)	44	
200 Day Not in Calf Rate (%)	19	
Infertility Culling Rate (%)	6.8	
Cost of Infertility (ppl)	2.31	
Cost of Infertility (£/cow)	197	
Cost of Extended Calving Interval per Day	4.26	

### Suckler Cows

Suckler cows should aim for a scanning percentage of 96% and a calving interval of less than 12 weeks.

If the scanning percentage is lower or the calving period is longer than this, the problem should be investigated.

- Is the bull infertile?
- Do you swap your bulls every 3 weeks?
- Are the cows in the correct condition?
- What is the health status of your herd?

For further information regarding any product or service that Dugdale Nutrition offer, please contact your local DN Sales Specialist or call DN HQ on 01200 420200 and we will be happy to help. Alternatively, you can visit the website listed below.

