



10 no-brainers

Work with your veterinarian to make sure these 10 dairy health management tools are being used

THE ROLE OF THE veterinarian has evolved from being a provider of emergency health care to delivering production medicine.

Production medicine involves the use of individual cow production and disease data to analyze the productivity of the dairy herd (not just individual animals). Veterinarians can review data and determine whether the herd is healthy and productive.

The goal of all veterinarians is to work with successful, profitable dairy farms and to, in some way, make a positive difference to the productivity of the farm. We as veterinarians are constantly faced with situations where we must make recommendations.

These recommendations are based on production, disease or culling records. We must consider the unique design aspects of the dairy facility and the management styles of the owners we work with. As well, veterinarians are relied upon to make recommendations based on their own previous success or failure. These are the challenges that our profession is confronted with daily.

There are certain decisions that can be made on your dairy farm that are predictable, repeatable and have a relatively low risk of failure. These decisions can be referred to as the 'No Brainers'. These 'No Brainers' work in most facilities and owner management styles. Listed below are the top 10 'No Brainers' for your dairy farm.

[The writer is a bovine veterinarian with Tavistock Veterinarians]

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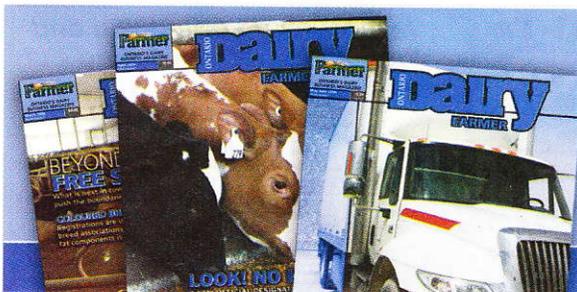
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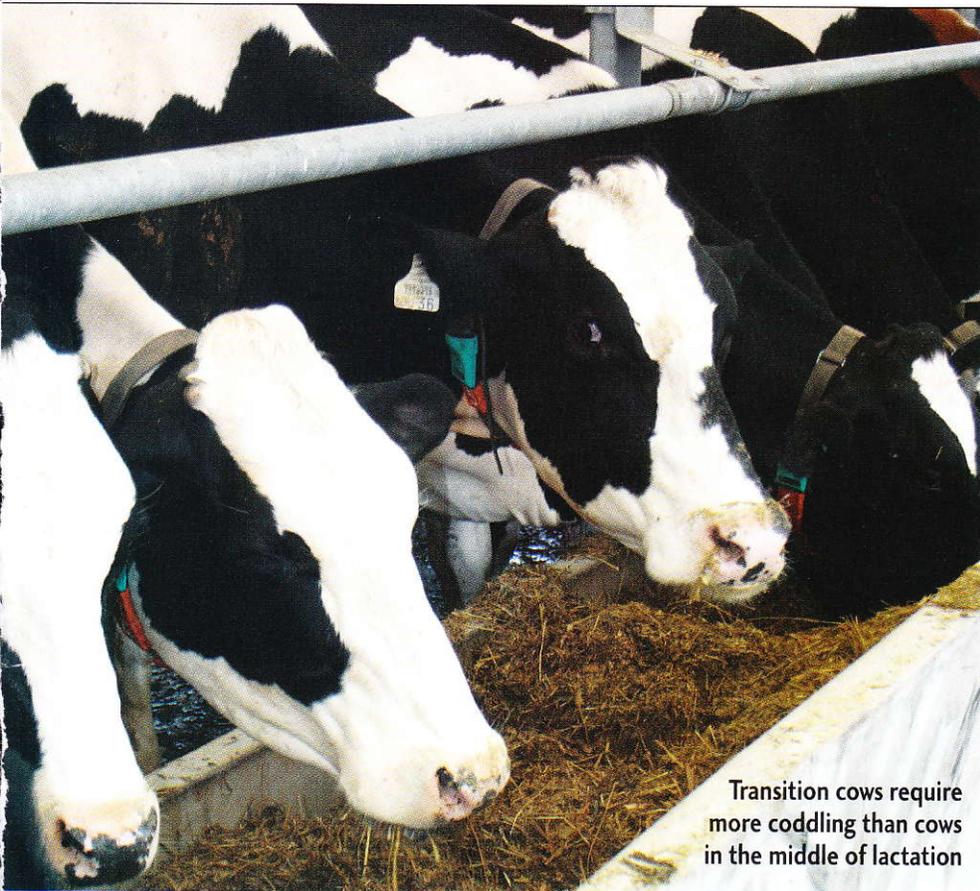
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Transition cows require more coddling than cows in the middle of lactation

[TOP 10 NO-BRAINERS]

1. Excellent nutritional management is critical to the productivity of the dairy farm. Dairy rations based on high quality, digestible forages should be the goal of every dairy farmer. All animals should be fed a balanced ration based on frequent feed analysis. Every farm should determine the dry matter of forages utilized in total mixed rations (TMRs).

The Penn State Shaker Box is an excellent tool to determine the effective fiber level of your TMR. All ensiled feeds should have an inoculant added at harvest.

2. Cow comfort is very important for herd productivity and animal welfare. Cow comfort must include proper stall design, proper bedding, and excellent air quality and must include a heat stress management program. Sand bedding is the gold

standard for stall surface comfort.

3. Transition cows must be coddled. They require excellent cow comfort, adequate bunk space (30 inches per cow). The transition cows should be continuously monitored for the presence of subclinical ketosis. Rumensin premix or Rumensin Continuous Release Bolus (CRC bolus) are effective tools in the transition period.

4. A successful reproductive herd health program is essential for a dairy farm's financial success. The reproductive program should revolve around pre-booked weekly or bi-weekly visits. Accurate records are the backbone of a successful reproductive program.

The strategy for improving reproductive efficiency is to maximize the number of cows in heat to accept semen. This can be achieved by excellent heat detection, utilizing a

needle program or a combination of both. All heifers and cows should be bred by artificial insemination (AI).

5. Your herd must have a routine foot trimming program. One time per year foot trimming is not enough. Cows should be foot trimmed at dry off and early in lactation. All farms should have a foot trimming chute or facility to facilitate immediate corrective care of lame cows.

6. Every herd should have a vaccination strategy. The program varies with respect to the risk level for disease in the herd. Diseases of significant concern include Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), E. coli mastitis and calf diarrhea. Contact your herd veterinarian to create your herd vaccination program.

7. A magnet should be administered to all animals. A convenient time to administer the magnet is when a heifer is bred for the first time.

8. Every herd should utilize a production and disease recording system such as ODHI or AFI. Milk volume, butterfat per cent, protein per cent and disease incidence are important herd monitors.

9. All cows should receive intramammary dry cow therapy at dry-off. Intramammary teat sealant at dry-off is a very useful tool.

10. The young dairy calf is the future of your herd. Holstein calves should receive four litres of clean colostrum within four hours of birth. Include special penning in the maternity pen to isolate the young calf until it can be removed to the calf rearing area. Ensure proper feeding levels of milk or milk replacer for adequate growth. Water should be available to all calves as well as milk or milk replacer. Implementation of the No-Brainers on your dairy farm should be discussed with your herd veterinarian. **⑩**