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APRIL 2007 NEWSLETTER

Equine - Reproduction

Mares are considered to be long-day, seasonally polyestrous breeders. This means that a mare will naturally cycle about every 21 days during late spring, summer and early fall. Despite intensive management, mares are considered to have a low reproductive efficiency. This is largely due to multiple factors arising from human management. Racing and performance industries create or desire a breeding period that does not coincide with the mare's normal breeding period. The mare or stallion is often selected as breeding stock for many performance indices but rarely for breeding soundness. Animals generally have to prove themselves in competition prior to being allowed to breed, which has led to geriatric animals being used as breeding stock.

It becomes evident that in order to successfully breed a mare; a proper understanding of the mare's cycle, combined with intensive management and careful observation is vital. The estrous cycle generally lasts for a total of 21 days. The estrus period can last for 4 to 6 days. This is the period of time in the mare's cycle when she is receptive to the stallion. During this time she can mature one or more follicles. An active follicle will usually grow approximately 3-5mm per day. The majority of 400-550kg mares will ovulate a follicle between 45-65mm in diameter whereas the smaller mares tend to ovulate a follicle between 35-45mm in diameter. Keep in mind that there is individual and breed specific variation. Diestrus follows estrus for the following 16-17 days. A corpus luteum will be active and the mare will not be receptive to the stallion.

The majority of mares will be in a period of anestrus or sexual inactivity during the winter months. During this phase, the ovaries will be small, smooth and firm. There will be no follicular activity and no corpus luteum will be present. As the day begins to lengthen, the mares go through a period known as the transition phase. The mare's behavior can become very erratic and she may also have prolonged estrus phases. The ovaries are changing and multiple small follicles begin to develop during this time. However, very few of these follicles will grow sufficiently to be ovulated. It is best to avoid breeding mares during this transitional phase due to the increased likelihood of endometritis (inflammation of the uterine lining) from excessive breeding in this phase. It is believed that 20-25% of mares have estrous cycles year round.

DAIRY

Over the last 12 months our clinic has been participating in a country-wide reproductive trial sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Ov-Synch program in getting cows pregnant. The protocol used was to enroll any cow not already bred by 75 DIM in the ov-synch program. In addition, any cows checked open at bi-weekly herd health were automatically started on the ov-synch program. Cows detected in natural heats were bred accordingly.

After 12 months of this program our trial herd has demonstrated exceptional results! The pregnancy rate for this herd has gone from 11% all the way to 20%. This has meant 10 additional pregnancies in this 40-cow herd as well as a decrease in days in milk from 180 to approximately 160, resulting in an increased milk production of close to 3 litres per cow per day. With extra incentive days this spring and an increase in quota, this farmer sits in an excellent position to make use of these opportunities.

This trial has conclusively demonstrated that by implementing a reproductive management program can and will improve the reproductive performance on your farm. This leads to increased milk production, more fresh cows, greater numbers of calves and improved culling opportunities. Speak to your herd health veterinarian about how to best implement a program that is right for you.

Special Pfizer Pricing

Now is the time of year to begin focusing on preventing environmental mastitis on your farm. The warm summer months are fast approaching and before we know it watery mastitis will once again be upon us. Just in time for this challenge Pfizer has announced special pricing on Novodry, Obeseal and Enviracor mastitis vaccine when purchased together. By purchasing these products in combination you can save 25% over buying these products separately. Speak to a veterinarian about environmental mastitis and its control, and contact the office to get more information on this excellent opportunity.

Pfizer has also announced improved pricing on Lutalyse and CIDRs in combination. These products are popular in reproductive management programs as well. Contact the office to learn more about this special pricing and the opportunity to save 33% on CIDRs over regular price.

SWINE

Update on Circo Virus vaccine status: we have better supply of the Intervet PCV₂ vaccine as we move into April. There is a significant database from Ontario and Quebec that is clearly showing that this product needs to be a two dose vaccination program. Two doses, given at weaning and three weeks later provide the best results. So far there is good results when giving 1cc twice. The decision to give one or two cc is based on cost and risk. We do not recommend using this vaccine as a single dose product!

The B.I. circoflex works very well as a single dose at weaning. Supply of this vaccine is still an issue as we move into April. We have started using some part dose sow vaccine programs on weaned pigs. We will keep you informed of the outcome of these programs as more vaccinated pigs hit the finishing barns.

PRRS: we are hoping PRRS season is coming to a close for 2006/2007 winter months. There have been a number of new outbreaks this year. It seems likely that every year will be similar until we can better control the spread of this virus. There are 100's of PRRS strains and cross protection between strains is often very poor. We should however focus on the things we can change. In an upcoming Ontario hog farmer publication an article on the Danish entry will be published. This entrance tool can be applied to any pig barn. Have a read and if you have any questions give us a call.

We are very pleased with the Pulmotil serum exposure program. We could not use it effectively in all PRRS outbreaks because the virus can move through a population very quickly (particularly a negative herd). The outcomes have been very predictable on the farms that we could use the program.

We have also seen some good results from Draxxin at weaning when weaned pigs are viremic. It seems to control the secondary bacterial challenge well and is better than high feed or water medication.

If you have any questions about the above information please give a call to the clinic.

BEEF: COW CALF

The cow calf industry has been moving towards late spring calving to take advantage of nicer weather and more cow placement option. One of the health challenges that can devastate a calf crop is enteric pathogens causing scours. We have described the importance of colostral immunity as well as prompt electrolyte intervention in previous newsletters. However electrolyte intervention cannot be over stated. Dehydration is the main killer of scouring calves therefore intervention must be targeted at fluid replacement. Oral fluid replacement is your first line of intervention. Ensure you mix the electrolytes (e.g. Calf Lyte II) with the appropriate amount of warm clean water and tube the calf with an esophageal feeder bag or bottle before it gets weak and staggery. Three treatments on the first day is not excessive!!

The other option that later spring calving can provide is cow placements. Many farms have one area that they do all their calving in and move cow calf pairs out to other areas. If you run into a scour problem move the close up group of cows into an unused area for further calvings to break the transmission cycle. Good luck to your 2007 calving season.