

## Maximise Milk Output This Season

### FACT 1 Late calvers cost you money

Less days in milk *Late calving cows* become *late mating cows*

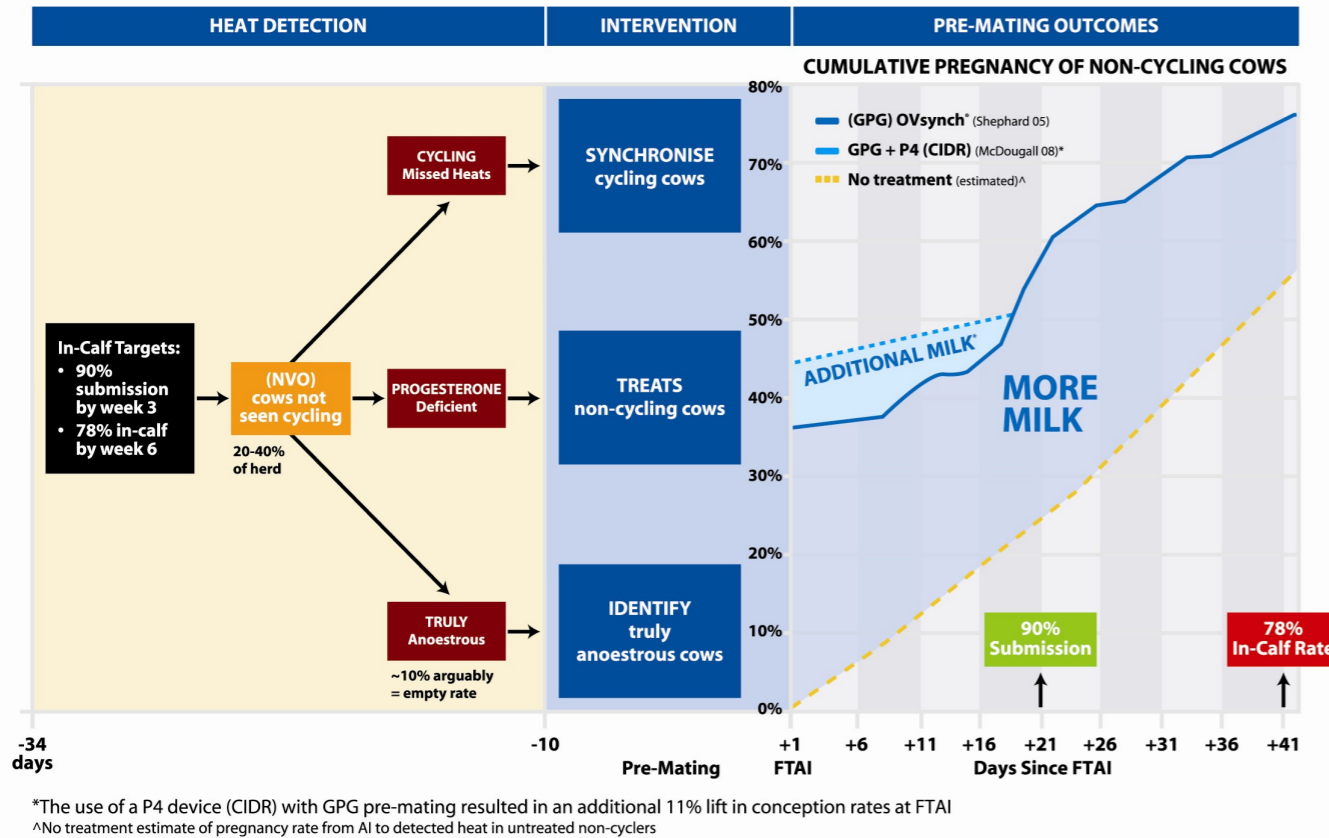
### FACT 2 Treating non-cycling cows significantly increases in-calf rates

Every single trial involving hormone treatment of non-cycling cows has the treated cows perform significantly better than the control cows

### FACT 3 Early treatment yields best results

No matter the payout, early treatment (pre-mating) of non-cycling cows returns more money

### The optimal timeline for intervention



### Exporting Heifers?

#### Let us know before we vaccinate!

Included with this newsletter is the form we send every year regarding vaccination requirements.

Please complete and return the form to enable us to schedule appropriate visits.



Please note that if you have any intention to export heifers to China or Mexico we cannot vaccinate them against IBR (otherwise known as catarrh). I have no idea why, but it's just the way it is. IBR is a component in our routine BVD vaccine 'Viracare'. We use Viracare because it gives good protection for calves away grazing against BVD and IBR/Catarrh and it is cheaper than the stand-alone BVD vaccines (previously Bovillis BVD, now Pregsure) we use in herds that have BVD issues. IBR, while not as dramatic as BVD, is an issue for animals and as well as the 'catarrh' that you see occasionally can also cause reproductive problems if the heifers pick it up around mating, which is why we routinely use Viracare to give them that added protection.

If you think you might be exporting this season's calves next year when they are heifers, please tell us and we will either leave them unvaccinated (not recommended) or vaccinate them with Pregsure instead to protect them against BVD when away grazing this season. If you don't tell us, we will continue to use Viracare.



# Eltham Vet Services

### September 2009

Remind me again? Are the bankers that are now telling you to cut back on everything and refusing credit/overdraft extensions the same bankers (feel free to substitute the letter 'W' for the 1<sup>st</sup> letter if you wish) that two years ago were encouraging you to go further into debt to buy another farm rather than reduce your debt levels? I thought so.

How are you getting on? The weather has certainly played its part and that combined with severely restricted cashflows have resulted in perhaps the quietest spring we've ever experienced. Speaking to the folks from the farm supply companies, they are even quieter. Thank goodness the grass has started to take off and ironically given that many of you have delayed or cancelled spring fertiliser application the quality of that grass may end up being really good rather than the usual "green water standing" that Brian Brown used to go on about. We certainly want to see cows putting on condition over the next 4-6 weeks leading into mating so let's hope that the weather continues to favour us and grass growth and quality oblige. Watch out for bloat arriving early!

Given the timing of this newsletter we will be concentrating almost exclusively on reproductive matters - options, prices and hopefully reasoned arguments for the benefits of early intervention with your non-cyclers, even in a recession.

We've really only been doing what you would consider to be the unavoidable spring jobs such as calvings, prolapses and so on. Metabolic problems are down again this year, either because there haven't been many or because you have decided to treat them yourselves.

Inductions were late getting underway due to the initial lack of grass and that has led to a few 'issues' in terms of cows meeting the criteria under the Induction Code of Practice. I'm sad to say that we have had a few (actually very few, but still unpleasant when they occur) 'disagreements' with clients wanting us to induce cows that clearly don't meet the criteria; either too close, too thin or too old (in some cases all three). When we refuse we are told we are being obstructive and they threaten to take their business elsewhere. Well good luck. If you can find another vet practice willing to induce cows that don't meet the criteria set out under the code, I will be very surprised. We are simply doing our jobs under the guidelines set out by the code, which incidentally comes up for review next year. It's nothing personal, honestly; and being confrontational and aggressive certainly isn't going to help your case. As I say these instances have been very few and a big thank you to the overwhelming majority of you who have embraced the code and what it entails.

Our chairman liked the gift basket we got him when he had his hip replaced earlier this year so much that as soon as he was able, he went and got the other one done - simply to get his hands on another one. Not true obviously, but he was pleased to see me when I popped in after surgery, even if it was just to hold a bowl while he 'parked the coleslaw' as he put it.

Hopefully the golf balls, in with the other goodies, will encourage him to get up and about and be ready for golf day next June. Get well soon Abbo!



Congratulations to our 'new' vet, Lindsay, who became a Granddad for the first time recently. He joins Jim and Frank as our resident grandparents on the staff.

Finally a big thank you to Bruce Gordon and the Gavin boys who intercepted a runaway Huntaway that despite being admitted a couple of days earlier for pneumonia decided that a 15 km run home to Pukengahu was preferable to staying in the clinic getting his medicine. Thanks guys, there's no worse feeling than discovering a patient has escaped!



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## NonCyclers - Cidrs or OvSynch?

How are you going to treat your non-cyclers this year and when? Advice from all professionals should be the same when talking about non-cyclers - the earlier you do it the greater cost benefit you will get. Remember we are talking about a treatment plan that will result in more days in milk the following season and therefore greater return 12 months down the line. Obviously this year cashflow is an unavoidable issue for many. What's the saying? "Bankers are the kinds of people who give you an umbrella when it is fine and take it away when it starts to rain". They will be telling you to cut spending wherever possible but don't seem to understand that leaving non or late cyclers until the end of AB will hit you harder in the pocket in terms of milk production the following season and probably result in you needing to treat even more cows the following year. Non-cycling cows are a natural occurrence in the seasonal dairy system. The average number of cows not seen cycling prior to mating is about 20% nationwide so unless you are one of the lucky ones who gets very few the only question you should be asking yourself is "How will I treat them?"

If you decide to be proactive and deal with these cows you have two options:

**OvSynch** on its own or with the addition of a Cidr (**CidrSynch**).

There is a third twist with the CidrSynch option that I will get to in due course.

How do the programs work? A refresher:

**OvSynch:** Day 0 - line up all non-cycling cows for their 1<sup>st</sup> injection of "OvSynch 1" by vet  
Day 7 - give all cows an injection of PG "OvSynch 2" by vet (we will leave 3<sup>rd</sup> shot)  
Day 9 - all cows receive their final injection, "OvSynch 3", generally at evening milking  
Day 10 - fixed time insemination of all cows in the morning

A couple of points:

In past years we recommended that if a cow came on after the 1<sup>st</sup> injection you should pull her out and inseminate her thus removing her from the program. Recent findings would suggest that the conception rates to this insemination after the 1<sup>st</sup> shot is very low, perhaps only about 18%. The advice nowadays is that those cows should not be removed but stay in the program at least until after the 2<sup>nd</sup> shot.

The only exception to this advice regarding the 1<sup>st</sup> shot would be if you are using OvSynch later in the mating season, say after 3 or 4 weeks. In that case, it's always possible she has cycled earlier and been missed in which case this heat could be a 'real' one and you can inseminate her if you wish (especially if she is an older cow in good condition).

Cost of OvSynch is **\$23 per cow plus visit fees**.

**CidrSynch:** Essentially do the OvSynch program but on day one put in a Cidr. If you want cows individually examined this does attract an extra cost of \$3.50 per cow. The advice these days is that unless a cow has obviously cycled (i.e. has 'CL') examination is not cost effective (how many times have we examined a cow, thought she was going to come on and left her only to return 2-3 weeks later and put in a Cidr because she never came on? Not treating her the first time has just cost you 3 weeks potential milk production).

The program is: Day 0 - vet visit to insert Cidr and inject with OvSynch 1  
Day 7 - vet visit to remove Cidrs and inject OvSynch 2 (we will leave you 3<sup>rd</sup> shot)  
Day 9 - farmer inject cows with OvSynch 3 at evening milking  
Day 10 - Fixed time insemination of all cows

Cost of CidrSynch is **\$36.50 per cow + visits** + examination fees if applicable.

There is a twist to this program. Remember last year we introduced an extra injection on day 7? For another \$6 we added an injection of PMSG as well as the PG at day 7, which had been suggested would increase conception rates further, perhaps as much as another 10%. This has borne out as being accurate in certain groups of cows. Results of last season's use of the added PMSG at day 7 has shown, according to Scott McDougall of Morrinsville, that in thin cows and cows calved less than 40 days at time of treatment conception rates do indeed increase and the added cost is beneficial in this group of cows. In cows calved more than 40 days and/or in good condition, this extra injection was not shown to be cost effective. So perhaps if you have a number of late calvers and thin cows you should seriously consider adding the extra injection on day 7 to increase the chances of conception for those cows.

### Which program should I use?

Obviously OvSynch is cheaper and less hassle so becomes very attractive especially this year. In some herds we have found it to be very successful. In other herds less so.

OvSynch will deliver lower conception rates on average than CidrSynch. If your cows are in good condition and have been calved more than 40 days, there is a chance it will deliver results comparable with Cidrs. On a few farms we have achieved 50% conception to the fixed-time insemination with OvSynch. However I believe those cows were not truly anoestrus, rather what I would term 'sub-oestrus' and just needed a "kick" to get them going, which is why OvSynch worked so well for them.

However in truly anoestrus cows the evidence is overwhelming that added use of a Cidr will consistently deliver better conception rates than OvSynch on its own and would certainly be our recommended treatment option in thinner and/or younger cows that are likely to have very little activity on their ovaries. There is obviously a greater up front cost to this but the return on investment will outweigh the cost of treatment especially early in the mating season. The earlier you treat non-cycling cows the greater the initial cost obviously, but also the greater the return in terms of increased days in milk the following season which translates to more money.

Have a chat with your vet to decide what is the best option for you and when is the best time to treat.



## Synchronising Heifers. Your options

If you want to synchronise heifers this season you basically have two options and what option you choose will depend on where they are, how easily you can get an AB technician out there and how much you want to spend.

### Option 1. Two Prostaglandin (PG) Injections 11 days apart (10-12)

This is the lowest cost option, but comes with a few provisos:

We inject all heifers with PG on first day and repeat a second shot 10-12 days later.

Heifers will start coming on heat from about the 2<sup>nd</sup> day after the last shot and the bulk will come on heat over the next 5 days. You can continue to AB longer if you want but generally after 5 days the bull is put out to 'mop up' any late cyclers and returns

- Heifers must be cycling. PG's only work on cycling animals so if your heifers are small and you haven't seen any action this won't work.
- Insemination needs to be to observed heats; this option is not suitable if you want to do fixed-time inseminations
- Do you or the AB technician have time to visit every day for 5 days after the second injection to inseminate heifers seen on heat?

If your heifers are in good order, cycling and you are able to visit each day for at least 5 days after the second injection this option may be suitable for you. It is cheap at \$5.50 per injection + visit fees.

One last fish-hook however - even in ideal circumstances occasionally we find we get a very poor result with this option. Frankly we don't know why. Usually, all things being equal it works well when inseminating to observed heat, but be warned, occasionally it just doesn't go well.

### Option 2. Cidrs

This is your only practical option if you intend fixed-time insemination and works as follows:

- Day 0 - Vet visit to insert Cidrs and inject with GnRH
- Day 7 - Vet visit to remove Cidrs and inject with PG
- Day 9 - Inject with GnRH and inseminate all heifers on that day

Last season the recommendation was to inseminate the day after the last injection but what happened was about 50% of heifers came on heat on Day 9 so the recommendation this year is to do them at the time of the 3<sup>rd</sup> injection. It also saves you an extra day of yarding. We will usually leave you the 3<sup>rd</sup> shot to give yourself, saving you another visit fee. Cost \$36.50 + visit fees

## Never too early to start recording heats



With the official arrival of spring it's time to start thinking seriously about mating in 4-6 weeks' time. I'm sure you are all as keen as possible to reduce the number of cows put up for examination and/or treatment due to non-cycling this season. So, why not start tail-painting and/or recording heats now? As they say, information is power and the more cows recorded as having been seen on heat prior to mating, the fewer cows you will be treating. You all carry that little yellow book in your pocket so, if you see a cow on heat from today, why not write it down?



## Don't Forget Iodine

A reminder that addition of stock iodine to the water can be of help in getting cows cycling. It's not a silver bullet but it's one of those oldies that have been shown over the years to be of benefit. What's more, it's cheap and easy to administer in the water so why wouldn't you give it a go? Iodine levels will have a direct effect on the thyroid gland and production of thyroid hormones (T4) and if low will have an adverse effect on cycling. We generally don't bother to test for it (actually we test T4 levels) because to be honest it's more expensive to test for it than it is to chuck some in the water - 40mls/100 cows/day.

