



Pregnancy Diagnosis Results -

What is the benefit of prompt PDing and how can we use this data?

- November 25

Many herds have been undertaking pregnancy diagnosis recently and unsurprisingly, with the heat and shortage of forage over the summer, results have been somewhat variable.

Why bother pregnancy diagnosing the herd?

- Prompt PDs (45 days + after removal of the bull) gives a good indication of how well the breeding period has gone. The earlier PDs are done, the more accurate we will be in terms of estimating individual stage of gestation, which can help with planning for the calving period. Ideally, we want the majority of cows calving in the first 21 days as this leads to more uniform sizing of calves, heavier weaning weights and overall easier management. If this is not the case, then we can assess factors that may have led to either empty cows, or a spread-out calving block



Results can help inform:

- **Culling / breeding decisions:** If cows are empty and to be culled then getting rid of them before winter housing saves on feed - particularly important this year! Plus, we currently have the bonus of strong cull value. We can also evaluate which animals have failed to get in-calf which could help influence breeding decisions in subsequent years. For example, if most of the cows who have not got in calf are much older or in poor condition, being a little more harsh on culling going forward could be a benefit. If we can get rid of these cows when they are in better condition it could help reduce deaths on farm or lead to increased returns on cull animals
- **Nutrition:** if we think that perhaps nutritional / trace element issues may have led to poorer conception rates then we can consider specific causes and aim to plan to avoid the same issues next year. We can also undertake blood sampling prior to calving to assess if any supplementation is needed at this stage
- **Bull efficiency:** Although we recommend testing bulls at least 8 weeks prior to putting them in with cows, we are aware that this does not always happen! If testing has not been undertaken prior to the breeding season and the bull is suspected to have been the issue, then he can be checked and plans made for next year if he is a problem. It is worth remembering that even proven bulls can have issues in subsequent years eg. lameness or illness



- **Assessment of heifer fertility:** We want heifers to be as front loaded in the calving block as possible, giving them sufficient time to recover from their first calving to get back in calf a second time. If heifers seem to have struggled then we have a look at sourcing of heifers if bought in, growth rates if home bred and selection of heifers to be used as replacements
- **Infectious disease issues:** Poor scanning results could also be related to infectious disease circulating in the herd, allowing us to pick up on issues early and look towards testing, management or vaccination

As you can see - advantages of prompt PD-ing of the herd go beyond just knowing who is in calf and who isn't! Remember that the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway Funding is still available and this could be used towards a visit for PDs and subsequent planning based on results.

All the best ,
Sarah



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