



As we enter a period of bleak winter milk prices, undoubtedly 'passengers' in any system will be under scrutiny and refining system efficiencies at the forefront of minds. In this newsletter I will cover the 'high fertility cycle' concept; an increasingly well researched phenomenon that encompasses old ideas many experienced dairy farmers will be familiar with in formats outside of this title. In summary, it describes a situation where a 'timely pregnancy' one lactation fulfils a prophecy of future pregnancies, health and productivity as cows manage themselves from one lactation to the next – whilst the alternative situation depicts a herd in an uphill struggle. The cycle is underpinned by body condition as a sentinel for fertility success or fertility car-crash; outlining where the focus should be for fertility blips or trends on farm beyond chasing KPIs alone. The principles apply for any system, chosen fertility protocols, VWP or lactation profiles; timely cows within this cycle become efficient, sustainable cows forming the base of profitable systems.

Early pregnancies drive future body condition

Cows in calf early enter the dry period at a BCS within the parameters of the 'high fertility cycle' reducing late lactation condition gain or incorrect calving BCS.

FAT COWS FAIL: Primed for condition (appetite) loss

BCS 3 at dry: 30% lose condition pre/post-calving

BCS 3.5 at dry: 90% lose condition pre/post-calving

Calving to pregnancy interval < 130DIM – 75% less chance of losing BCS next lactation

Timely pregnancies reduce BCS gain

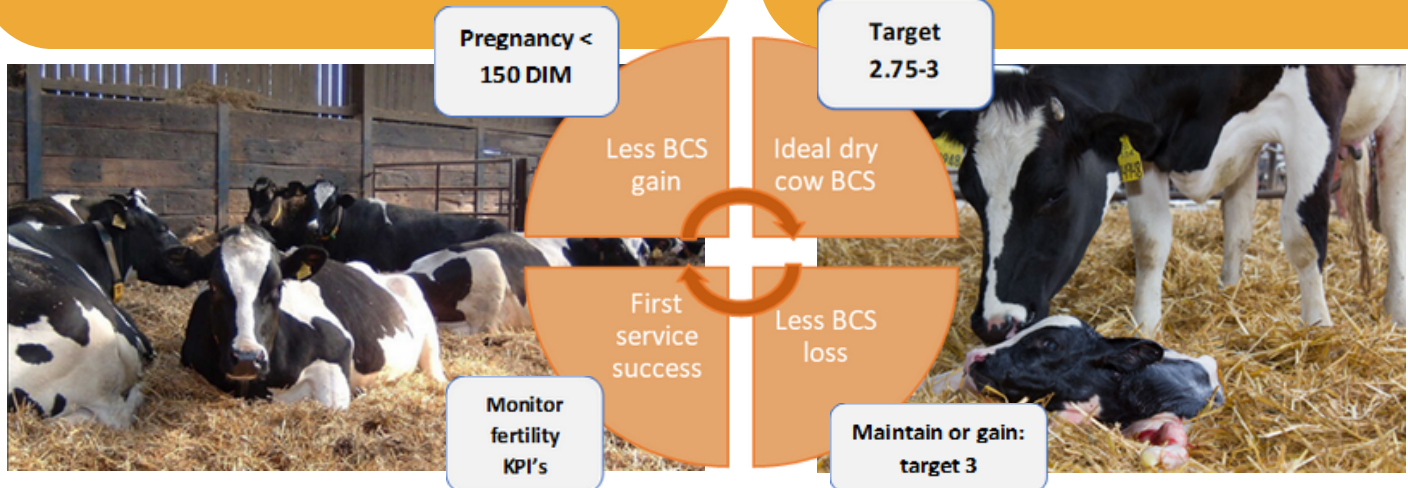
BCS loss 3 weeks pre/post calving impacts..

Future embryo viability (~ 40-80 days ahead) **reduced by up to 40%** vs cows that maintain or gain BCS.

Resumption of cyclicity = ready for service (VWP!) **33 days vs. 47d at return** for cows losing vs gaining BCS.

Pregnancy per AI at first service vs. cows that maintain or gain BCS – **up to 60% reductions**

Health events – **60% of cows** that loose condition in this period are more likely to experience 1 of mastitis, metritis, ketosis, lameness or respiratory disease.



Cows within a high fertility cycle...

Improved return to cyclicity – heat detection rate %

Improved first service success – conception rate %

Reduced pregnancy losses – 8% greater risk of **32 – 60d losses** in cows that loose body condition in early lactation

Over-conditioned cows loose condition quicker whilst underconditioned cows struggle from the start

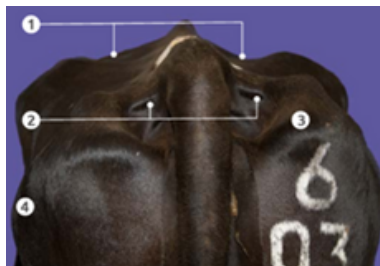


Pre-calving BCS management

Feed space and feed quality: aiming for target energy, protein and fresh palatable feed spaced at 100cm/cow (or equivalent in grazing/outdoor systems) on a daily basis promotes correct that avoids BCS loss, a compromised lactation and a barren cow in 6 months time.



Body Condition Score (5-Point Scale)



Early pregnancy establishment

As discussed, cows within a high fertility cycle are more likely to express early heats and conceive < 130DIM. Those that aren't need identifying early to keep as much of the herd on the correct track;

Pre-breeding checks – identify cows that aren't cycling, cystic or have developed uterine disease post-calving; these cows are at risk of delayed heats and delayed conception, increased BCS and future underperformance.

Key performance indicators to monitor the % of the herd falling into the self-sustaining fertility cycle:

AYR herds

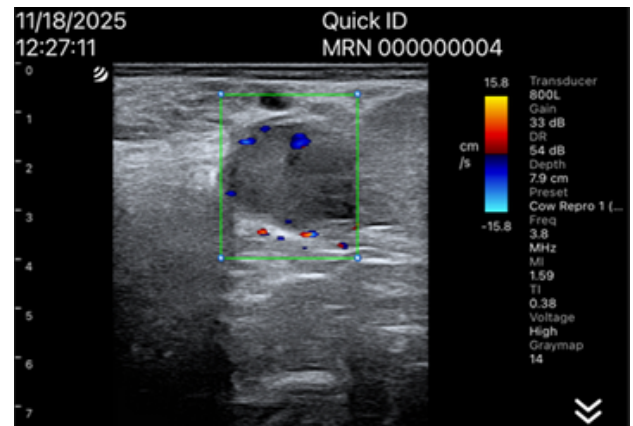
- > 80% of the herd in calf at 150 DIM
 - Avoid late lactation services > 200 DIM
 - Calving interval target 12-13 months (365-390 days)
- cows with previous long calving intervals (previous lactation) are at significantly greater risk of BCS loss in this lactation.

Block calving herds

- Cows/heifers calved in 6 weeks – 80% +
- 6 week in-calf rate – 70% +

Fresh cow management

Cows with good intakes pre-calving achieve better intakes and BCS stability post-calving...but only if they are provided with the correct diet to eat! Often fresh and late cows are single grouped; in these cases, catering for fresh cow requirements is a central tenet to keeping cows within the high fertility cycle. Pre and post-calving bloods can identify shortfalls in both areas whilst routine BCS assessments in this cohort are a good signal for monitoring success or pinchpoints for improvement.



Pre-breeding check at 40 DIM in a cow calved at condition score 3.5 identifying a non-functional corpus luteum, indicating an acyclic cow with future return to cyclicity and pregnancy significantly reduced compared to her herdmates calving in at 3 with minimal early lactation BCS changes.

Vet Tech Update

The GEORGE Farm Vets

VET TECH SERVICE

HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO CLIP BACKS BEFORE HOUSING?

OUR TECHS CAN COME OUT WITH KIT AND HELP RUN CATTLE THROUGH

WE CAN TRIM TAILS AT THE SAME TIME IF REQUIRED

CHARGED AT TECH TIME + VISIT FEE

Wishing you all a
**VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS!**

Will

