

Nutrition News

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Managing dry cow nutrition



A successful lactation begins with a well-managed dry period. Providing a cow with the right nutrition during the transition period can help boost milk production in the next lactation.

Around the calving period the cow is under a considerable stress, meaning that there is a high risk of metabolic disorders post-calving. One of the most common disorders is clinical and sub-clinical milk fever (hypocalcaemia). It is estimated that between 5 and 10% of cows suffer with either clinical or sub clinical milk fever but some evidence shows that the prevalence of this disease can be far higher.

Early signs of milk fever, which include teeth grinding, muscle tremors, stiff legs and straight hocks, usually occur within 24 hrs of calving but can occur at, or even before, calving.

It is worth noting that cows that get milk fever are eight times more likely to develop mastitis in the following lactation. They are also more likely to suffer a difficult next calving and have an increased risk of displaced abomasum. Additionally, cows are three times more likely to retain their placenta after having milk fever.

It is therefore crucial to ensure the transition diet fed to cows is providing the right nutritional support for the transition period in order to maintain cow health and performance after calving and into the next lactation.

Reducing the risk of milk fever:

- Having cows in the correct body condition score (BCS) is critical in preventing milk fever as over-fat cows are four times more likely to develop milk fever. Over-conditioned cows have a reduced

appetite in the close-up period, reducing the intake of essential minerals and vitamins.

- It is important to analyse forages for mineral status for the dry cow diet. High potassium silages can impair magnesium absorption, which could increase the likelihood of milk fever.
- Transition cows need adequate supplies of minerals, in particular magnesium, which has been shown to have a huge impact in reducing incidence of milk fever.

Corby Rock Mill has developed a pre-calving nut (spec 46 - pictured right) that is designed to fulfil the nutritional requirements of the dry cow and give her the best start to her next lactation.



The nut should be fed at 2kg per head per day for six to eight weeks before calving.

Benefits of feeding the nut include:

- 20% protein for udder regeneration and optimum colostrum quality and quantity.
- High spec pre-calving mineral with high levels of magnesium – crucial for helping to prevent milk fever.
- High levels of vitamin E to support the cow's immune system.
- Protected copper and selenium to further support the immune system.
- Protected zinc to help with tissue repair and hoof health.
- Also includes phosphorus, sodium, manganese, cobalt, iodine, vitamin A and D3.
- Includes anionic salts to help counteract harmful potassium levels in silage
- Provides extra energy to the cow when feed intake is reduced.

We're here to help, so for more advice on body condition scoring, silage analysis and the Corby Rock Milk pre-calver nut please contact your local sales representative.