

## UNPRODUCTIVE ANIMALS: DRY COWS

Visiting heifers and dry cows pens worldwide, we can easily feel that these animals are too often somehow neglected... Why? "Because they are not productive, they just need food and water" is the common idea...

Actually, **they are very important animals in the herd!** A poor management for these animals will automatically lead to severe repercussions in the next lactations.

### 8) Dry cows



*Over population and dirty bedding in dry cows pens*

Photo: Courtesy of DVM Robin Franzon, dairy technical support, CID LINES

It is a common situation to see farms with neat lactating cow pens and at the same time dirty and neglected dry cow area. Similar situation can be observed for the nutrition in these 2 groups. We want to explain here why it is so important to pamper the dry cows:

- The dry period allows the udder to rest after 300 days of intensive milk production. Some studies have shown that cows dried for less than 30 days, or not dried at all, have a lower production for the next lactations (source: "Le tarissement des vaches laitières", page 114).

- In term of mastitis treatment, the dry period is the best moment for the quarter to recover.

- A good transition period assures an efficient lactation. The 60 days of the dry period + the 40 days till the peak of production are the critical period to optimize the whole lactation.

#### ***How to make the best out of the "100 days period"?***

- 1) Nutrition: Energy in the nutrition must decrease during this non-productive period. Before calving, energy increases again to prepare the following lactation. It is important to do this transition step by step, during a minimum of 2 weeks, in order to let the cow (and the rumen) adapt to the new nutrition.



*Poor Body score condition in a dry cow pen*

TIP: Check the efficiency of the dry cow alimentation thanks to the BCS (Body Corporal Score) of the dry cows herd. It must be around 3.5 in average.

Too high or too low BCS will increases the risk of milk fever, ketosis, metritis, mastitis, placentum rentention after calving...

Source pictures: DVM Robin Franzon, dairy technical support, CID LINES

- 2) Comfortable, clean and dry pen is essential in order to preserve the cow from new udder infection.



*Overpopulation in a dry-cows pen*

Source pictures: DVM Robin Franzon, dairy technical support, CID LINES

- 3) Antibiotic treatments for mastitis infected cows at the end of the lactation allow the cow to cure during the dry period.

- 4) Clean and disinfect the calving pen in between each calving. Cows must not stay more

**Linked products: Sprayer + SD post-dipping products spray 1 week after dry-off and 1 week before calving**

