

Milk Fever

Animals Affected

- Older , especially cows greater than 5 years old.
- The Jersey cow is particularly prone.
- Overfat cows are also at significant risk.

Signs

- Cow is down , weak with her head turned in against her side.
- Cows show a rapid improvement when Calcium is administered.
- No energy , animals cannot get up.

Diagnosis

- Low blood Calcium and Phosphorus levels.
- High blood Potassium level.
- Low dry matter intake and reduced rumen activity.

Conditions

- Same cows often have had Milk Fever before.
- Dry cow mineral not fed at the correct level or time period.
- Dry cows were fed high Potassium forage ie. grazed grass .

Cause

- Older cows do not absorb Calcium well.
- Older cows release less Calcium from their bones.
- There is a high Calcium requirement as animals come close to calving.

Prevention

- Dry cows need to be fit , Body Condition Score 3.
- Extended dry cow periods only serve to fatten cows too much.
- Reduce the intake of grazed grass and grass silage.
- Feed palatable clean forage , no mouldy silage.
- Feed 2kgs of clean barley straw or hay to encourage the rumen.
- Feed Superchoice Pre- Calver Minerals for the full duration of the dry period.
- Ensure that every cow is getting dry cow minerals , feed twice per day.
- Allow for a little wastage as windy conditions can blow minerals away.
- Pre- Calver minerals need to contain at least 20% Magnesium.
- Phosphorus is also important , should be supplemented.

- Vitamin D is also important in Calcium regulation and high levels are required.
- Mineral blocks are an inconsistent means of feeding minerals.
- Do not overcrowd or restrict feed space as shy cows will be bullied.
- Dry cows need room to exercise and express themselves.
- The dry cow diet needs to be 14 to 16% protein in the dry matter
- Feed 1 to 2 kgs of concentrate for two weeks pre calving.
- Separate cows within 10 days of calving into a separate group.
- Keep all feed fresh , renew daily and provide clean and fresh water.
- Keeps rumens full with palatable feed as cows get close to calving.
- A little tender loving care goes a long way.

Prevention is better than cure.