

August 2011

Water Intake in the Dairy Cow

Over 85% of milk is water, so adequate water intake is essential to maximise milk production.

Maximum water intakes are best achieved by the provision of good quality, clean water and easy access to drinkers which are always full!

A high yielding cow may drink 200 litres each day during summer. Cows like to drink before and after feeding and milking, and may drink 10-15 times each day.

It also follows that the more drinkers that are available, the more chance even submissive heifers get enough to drink. One drinker for every twenty cow places is recommended for housed cows. Troughs should be placed at a height of 60cm-the trough below is too high even for a largish cow.



Providing clean water

Position water troughs where they won't get mucked in. If you have tipping troughs then tip daily and scrub out with a hand brush weekly. Bacteria thrive in the slimy rims which give the water an unpleasant taste and reduce intakes.



Temperature of the water?

The ideal temperature is 17 °C but the temperature of the water is not critical, so long as it is above zero. Cows will drink more in the winter if the water is warmed for example from the plate cooler.

However, during the summer, unless the trough is cleaned regularly rapid bacterial growth can occur in warmed water and cows will drink less.

Reducing the Lambing Period

Ram vasectomy is a management technique used principally to produce a compact lambing period. The ewe flock is isolated for at least one month from sight, smell and sound of rams or wethers. After this period a vasectomised ram is put with the flock for a period of 12 days. Two teaser rams per 100 ewes are required.

The ram is then removed and replaced by normal rams. This results in a compact lambing period, usually in two peaks some six to eight days apart.

When teaser rams are used then a higher ram to ewe ratio is required, 1 per 25-30 being ideal.



If you require any more information about vasectomising tups then please do not hesitate to contact the surgery.



As a vasectomised ram will be kept within a flock for a number of years, it is important that the right type of animal is chosen. It should be strong and healthy, with good incisor teeth occlusion, sound feet and no signs of any arthritic condition, head or brisket sores. The chosen ram should have had some sexual experience and well developed genitalia. After the procedure the vasectomised rams may pass live sperm for the first few days. They may be safely introduced to a ewe flock after 2 weeks. Vasectomy of rams is usually done on farm under local anaesthetic with the ram lightly sedated.