Dairy Farm reproductive management in the absence of induced parturition

Aims:

To identify management strategies which are being used by farmers to achieve a compact calving spread and acceptable reproductive results under a nil induction policy.

Methods:

• Eight S.I. dairy farmers were interviewed to develop case study profiles of their farms and management strategies.
• Farms selected fit within the following criteria:
  - nil induction policy
  - 90% of herd calved in first eight weeks
  - empty rates below 10%

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Characteristics of the farms:

• High production (400 kgms/cow for twice/day herds)
• Production ranged from 1180 to 1600 kg ms/ha
• Herds were a mixture of Friesian, Jersey, Crossbred, NZ and Overseas genetics

Findings:

All farms placed a great emphasis on cow management

Animal Health:

• All farms had mineral supplementation program
• Somatic cells ranged between 80,000 to 180,000
• Low incidence of lameness in herds
• Low incidence of reproductive tract disorders
• Cows at body condition score of 5 at calving, heifers at 5.5

Feeding:

• Willing to put supplements into system at any time during lactation
• Controlled winter grazing (most had their own run off)
• Aimed to feed cows between 11 to 15 kg of dm per cow per day during winter

Other points:

• Most were highly involved with consultants (4 to 12 visits per year)
• Most had consultants condition score cows
• lowest empty rate was a once per day herd