Lead Feeding—Why You Cant Afford NOT to.....

No phase in a cows lactation cycle 'sets the stage' more than how you manage the dry cow and her transition phase. To become a top performer and profit maker, the transition cow is worthy of extra dietary care and management. Good health status and enhanced early lactation appetite have enormous impact on net profits. The main health issues include milk fever, mastitis, downer cow syndrome and other flow-on metabolic, production and reproduction problems.

Research has shown increases in intake of 20-25% as a result of lead feeding, which generates up to 5-6 litres per day difference in milk yield over the first 6 weeks of lactation (200-250L/cow), **plus** substantial reductions in milk fever, ketosis, and RFM (retained foetal membranes). Subclinical milk fever is eliminated, leading to better overall performance by the herd. Savings are also made by not needing to treat for milk fever as labour and drug costs alone can be a considerable cost.

Lead feeding has 3 major roles in preparing a cow for early lactation:

Increasing the energy density of the diet – a grain based lead feed concentrate will help to maintain energy intakes at a time when requirements are high and appetite is low. This leads to less calving trouble and reduced metabolic problems, especially ketosis.

Preparing the rumen for the milker ration – feeding concentrates will allow an easy transition onto the milker ration, and reduce the incidence of acidosis and displaced abomasums (LDA's & RDA's).

Reduce milk fever & metabolic problems – anionic salts, vitamins, minerals, & rumen modifiers work to reduce or even eliminate metabolic problems around calving time.

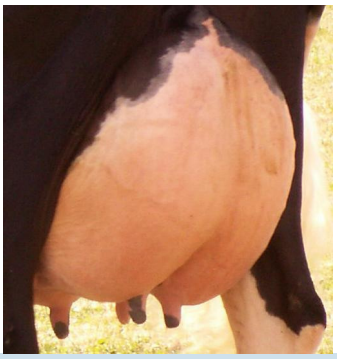
Potential cost of a milk fever case:

Lost Milk (1000L @ 25c/L)	$250
Mortality (assume 10% of cases @ $900/head)	$ 90
Intake effect	$ 72
Treatment Vet	$ 20
Calcium BG	$ 20
Labour	$ 8
Mastitis	$ 60
Total Cost	**$510**

At 20% herd incidence, the cost would be $102 for every cow in the herd, not allowing for the extra 5-6 litres/day increase in production obtained from non affected cows!

So for a cost of around $20/cow, you can't afford to not lead feed your herd, even (or especially) with the current low milk prices.

For more information on the benefits of lead feeding your herd, contact your Technical Services Representative.



Did you Know ??

- Majority of cow health problems occur in the transition period (3 weeks before calving → 3 weeks after calving).
- Left Displaced Abomasum is much more likely in a cow who suffers from milk fever.

- Volatile Fatty Acid (VFA) absorption is decreased in the transition cow, particularly those not fed concentrate leading up to calving.
- Concentrate feeding in the 2 weeks prior to calving is critical to help increase the absorptive capacity of the rumen papillae, to prevent VFA build-up in the freshly calved cow's rumen and reduce the incidence of acidosis.
- Concentrate feeding levels of up to 0.75% of bodyweight (eg 4.5kg for a 600kg cow) are recommended for proper rumen adaptation.
- Many early lactation laminitis cases can be attributed to severe changes to a cow's diet during the transition period.

- Bunk / Feed Trough Space of 45cm per cow is adequate for unrestricted feeding, but when limited feed is offered an allocation of 60cm is required for proper access by all animals in the group.
- Cows have a tendency to sort through feed, eating the smallest particles when feed is first offered, then consuming the larger fodder pieces 6 - 12 hours after feed is presented.