

Inefficient Heat Detection Is Devastating

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Inefficient heat detection is still the number one nemesis of efficient dairy herd reproductive performance and the successful use of artificial insemination. Assume a dairy farmer starts to breed cows 60 days after calving and the herd has a 50% conception rate. What level of reproductive performance can be expected in this herd with low heat detection efficiency? With 20% heats detected, 21% of a herd will not have been seen in heat and 48% will not be pregnant by 200 days after calving. Yes, you read it right . . . by 200 days after calving 21% of the herd will not be seen in heat (even once!) and 48% of the cows will not be pregnant! At 30% heat detection, 32% of the cows will not be pregnant by 200 days after calving. The bottom line is that low heat detection efficiency can single handedly devastate the reproductive performance of a dairy herd. The response to this situation in too many Kentucky dairy herds is to turn in the bull so cows will get pregnant. The view from my seat in the "Ivory Tower" shows that this adds insult to injury, but is necessary to avoid financial disaster.

Kentucky dairy farmers need to increase the percentage of cows and heifers bred to superior AI sires. Of course, there is no free lunch. The successful use of AI requires a commitment of time and management skill toward efficient detection of estrus. This is not an impossible task! Get out there and do it!

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