

## **It Is about Time to Get Serious about Getting Dairy Cows Pregnant**

by George Heersche, Jr.

We usually have some carryover from the summer heat so dairy cow fertility continues to be on the low side in September. September 2005 was hotter than normal so we might also experience lower than normal fertility in October. November, December and January are always good months to intensify reproductive management, maximize heat detection efficiency, and get cows pregnant. Those three months will be even more important in 2005-2006. Review the pointers below and gear-up to get cows pregnant when it gets cooler.

The following are the key factors required to maximize fertility:

- a. Have a qualified inseminator . . .
- b. Place high quality semen . . .
- c. Which has been handled correctly . . .
- d. At the right place . . .
- e. At the right time . . .
- f. Into cows which:
  1. definitely have been in heat
  2. are vaccinated for all reproductive diseases
  3. are consuming a balanced ration low in mycotoxins
  4. are not in a severely negative energy balance
  5. are not overfed on protein

Catching cows in heat continues to be a big management challenge for managers utilizing the safe and genetically superior method of getting cows pregnant, artificial insemination. The following are recommendations dairymen should utilize to maximize heat detection efficiency:

- a. Watch for heat 3 times per day
- b. Watch 30 minutes per time
- c. Make job 1 when doing
- d. Watch cows on dirt rather than concrete when possible
- e. Watch closely when cattle are moved to another location
- f. Use a 21-day reproduction calendar to anticipate who will be in heat

The following are additional recommendations dairymen can utilize to help catch cows in heat:

- a. Utilize heat detection aids – KaMaRs, tail head paint, etc.
- b. Utilize an androgenized animal. This technique works well and involves having an animal in the herd which has been given male hormones. This animal is always interested in interacting with cows in heat which improves the chance of catching a cow in heat.
- c. Dairy farmers can make it easier to catch cows in heat if they can get more than one cow in heat at a time. Synchronizing estrus is a good way to get cows to come in heat at about the same time. Several synchronization methods are available.
- d. Utilize one of the programmed breeding methods available to synchronize ovulation so cows can be inseminated at a predetermined time.

In summary, winter is a great time to get dairy cows pregnant. Dairy farmers should always make dairy cow reproductive performance a high management priority, but winter can yield particularly high returns on the time and energy invested in managing dairy herd reproduction.