Oestrus detection

Inseminating more cows at the right time
What is oestrus?

• Cows are capable of breeding throughout the year but cannot get pregnant at all times
• They are receptive to the bull for short periods of time, which occur at roughly 21 day intervals
• At this time, cow behaviour changes:
  – restless
  – persistent licking/sniffing
  – chin pressing
  – bellowing
  – mounting other cows
• This behaviour is called ‘oestrus’ or ‘heat’
Oestrus: The facts

- Oestrus lasts for about 8-12 hours
- 70% of such behaviour occurs at night
- In UK systems cows may be mounted around 20 times while on heat, although 7-8 times is more likely
Detecting oestrus: The key to effective reproduction

• Poor heat detection:
  – leads to missed and wrongly identified heats
  – huge impact on herd fertility
The signs of oestrus

- Attempting to mount other cows
- Mounting head-to-head (rare but cows are usually in heat if they do this)
- Restless behaviour
- Bellowing when isolated
- Small increase in body temperature
- Poor milk let-down
- Clear mucus ‘bulling string’

COWS WILL STAND TO BE MOUNTED WHEN UNRESTRAINED
Strategy for heat detection

- Not just in collecting yards and while feeding
- Two hours after morning feed – when herd is quiet
- Again after afternoon milking/feeding
- Observe quietly
- Ensure you can easily identify cows
- Ensure all staff are trained in heat detection
- All staff must have a single person to report to
Do we need to do more?

- Even with a well planned strategy - you may not get good submission rates
- Heat behaviour has reduced in duration and intensity
  - Increased yields
  - Non-seasonal breeding
  - Housing
  - Less time
Heat detection aids

- Range from cheap to expensive
- Tail paint/chalk
- Heat mount detectors
- Teaser bulls
- Milk progesterone
- Activity monitors
When to inseminate

- Follow the am-pm rule
- Inseminate too early rather than too late
Summary

• Good heat detection is essential
• Poor heat detection costs money
• Need a planned strategy – key staff role
• Constantly assess your performance
Thank you for participating in this webinar