

# Covid-19 Update - Planning for and Dealing with Workforce Absence



Information correct as at 12:00pm on 27.03.2020

## How might you change ways of working if you or key team members were isolated?

- Consider changes to milking patterns
- Explore options for feeding regimes that may reduce the number of mixes

Each situation will be different, but all scenarios should be aimed at maintaining cow health and wellbeing so that the herd is in the best possible shape when we come out of the crisis

### Milking:

- Moving 3X day milking to 2X day in the event of staff shortages
  - If staffing becomes an issue for one or more of the milkings, then changing from 3X to 2X is possible. There are two possible options to achieve this:
  - Option 1:
    - Move to two milkings at 12-hour intervals, this will minimise the stress from moving from 3X.
  - Option 2
    - If possible, continue to milk the 'Highs' 3X, with a smaller group, in a good set up, this can often be achieved with fewer people.
    - Milk the 'Lows' twice daily. Milk them first in the morning and last in the afternoon, to try to spread out their milking times.
  - Potential problems associated with moving to 2X from 3X
    - Will almost certainly cause a loss in production, especially in fresh cows.
    - Increase in risk of mastitis in high yielding cows
  - We would advise with any changes, to try to keep them simple and effective. This will help efficiency and ensuring production runs as smoothly as possible. We would not advocate trying to change into routes such as 3X every other day and 2X on the alternate days. This will likely cause confusion and lead to mistakes and problems.
- Milking time changes – caused by staff with other commitments e.g. childcare issues etc
  - Changing milking times should not be a problem, move to 12-hour intervals if possible, if this aids staffing.
  - Try to avoid gaps of more than 14 hours between milkings.

### Feeding:

#### Milking Herd:

- Changing daily feeding regimes is an option, but the premise to this is to save a mix and therefore time in the daily routine. If this isn't the case, then there will little point to moving to once daily feeding.
- Another way to try to reduce mixes/time is to feed one diet instead of two diets to different groups of milking cows. This maybe appropriate in your situation.
- Speak to you consultant/nutritionist to see if this is possible for your herd and the practicalities of how to do it to minimally impact the health of the cow.
- The feed should be pushed up regularly to ensure good access to feed.

- Potential problems associated with the above
  - Heating of the ration in the trough
    - Current ambient temperatures are not of great concern but as time moves on this may become an issue.
    - There are options for preservative to be placed in diets that are heating, if this is an issue for you speak to your consultant directly.

#### **Dry cows/Youngstock:**

- Dry cows can be fed once daily or every other day.
- Youngstock on forage-based diets can be fed once daily or every other day.
- The same heating issues will apply so take advice on using a preservative.
- Enough food needs to be present for the two days, it is vital that dry cows always have access to feed.
- The feed should be pushed up regularly to ensure good access to feed.
- A good time saving exercise is to alternate days feeding dry cows and youngstock.

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For further discussion or to help with any questions that you may have, please contact Consultant Support on [consultantsupport@kiteconsulting.com](mailto:consultantsupport@kiteconsulting.com) or 01902 851007 / 07542 403225

