

Transition Cow Research Opportunity

We all see the problems related that occur when a farm has a transition cow meltdown--LDAs, ketosis, retained placentas, impaired reproduction and decreased milk production. Transition cow problems involve a number of issues, including cow comfort and housing, calcium balance, and energy balance to mention a few.

One area of research relating to energy balance involves blood NEFA. Blood NEFA (non-esterified fatty acids) represent body fat mobilized from the cow's back, thighs, ribs, and abdomen. Research has shown that there is an optimal desirable level of NEFA. We want the cow to be able to use some fat for milk production, but if the breakdown is too rapid we may see clinical ketosis. NEFA is a term for a number of fatty acids and there is preliminary research that specific fatty acids may be more important than NEFA as a whole.

West Virginia University has an ongoing research project on one of our client's herds in Somerset County aimed at quantifying the various fatty acids that make up NEFA, and making interventions to adjust the NEFA levels and the resulting cow performance.

The next step in their project is to expand the project to a number of farms, doing blood tests on cows pre and post fresh to measure NEFA and individual fatty acids. We are asking that you consider being involved in this project. Volunteer herds will receive free testing of cows pre and post fresh. Sampling will be done by WVU staff. This information will be used to measure the level of NEFA in the population in general. In addition this information will be made available to you, your nutritionist, and your veterinarian, so that you may, if need be, formulate an intervention strategy to improve your herd. This project represents an opportunity to receive a substantial amount of free testing, and possibly keep you on the cutting edge relative to energy balance in transition cow management.

You may be contacted by Dr Joe McFadden, his staff or by one of the three of us at White Oak. In addition Dr McFadden will have a booth at the Somerset County Fair, where you can stop in and learn more about this opportunity. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.