



APRIL 2020 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

We would like to remind you that due to staffing and order restrictions in place, we require 3 days to process drug orders. Please send us orders well in advance of your herd visit to ensure our best service to you!

Call: (519) 229-8911 Text: (519) 282-8911 Email: office@kirktonvetclinic.ca

Farming in the Face of a Pandemic

“So how have you been coping with the quarantine?” For many of you, this has been an odd question as much of your day to day life has not changed, despite the world around you. Yet as things drag on, and with the announcement of the quota cut, so much really has changed just in the last month. This uncertainty can stir up feelings of anxiety and worry, all at one of the busiest times of the year.

The 2% quota cut starting May 1st will cause additional pressure for many farms who were already shipping over quota. Depending on how much milk you are over producing, you may be considering ways to reduce production, get rid of over-produced milk, or both. Normally, farms would consider culling any open cows, however the current situation with processing plants has put immense strain on the cull cow market in Ontario. Currently, Cargill is still open and functional however they are only able to process a certain number of animals. Many cull cows are currently being shipped as far as Georgia, which will have to be considered when making culling decisions. If a cow is not able to withstand a longer than normal route to slaughter, consider on-farm euthanasia. The team of bovine vets at Kirkton Vet Clinic can help you both with making these decisions as well as ensuring a humane euthanasia.

A quick fix for some farms will be to increase the list of cows to be dried off. Ensure that proper dry-off protocol is followed. Consider using a teat sealant if you aren't already, especially if the dry cow area is going to be at a higher stocking density than usual. If you greatly increase the number of dry cows on your farm, consider creating a group of 'far-far-off' dry cows. This will offer a way to feed these cows cheaply and will minimize any weight gain over the dry period. Exercise caution on keeping cows who are unlikely to make a good transition after an extended dry period, and try not to exceed 110 days dry. Any cost and production cutting measures for the lactating cow ration should be explored with your nutritionist and as always, filling quota remains the priority. Stepping back the density (protein and energy) of the ration should be avoided to prevent a cascade of negative effects on reproduction and health of the herd. The best bang for your buck may come from increasing the frequency at which you run dry matters on your farm, as now is the time to be sure you are getting the most out of your ration, TMR, and cows. Please consult with your nutritionist and your herd health veterinarian for additional information on specific ration changes.

Switching calves over from milk replacer to whole milk is another way to save some money. Diverting it before it reaches the plate cooler will save energy spent cooling, and will allow it to be fed to calves right away at the temperature it's harvested at. Calves should be switched over gradually to minimize any setbacks caused by the change. Feed them a 50:50 mixture of milk replacer and whole milk for a couple of days before gradually increasing the amount of whole milk. Calves should be fed a minimum of 8L / day and a maximum of 4L/ feeding.



Should you wish to discuss the different approaches your farm can take with respect to dry-off protocols, or feeding calves whole milk please do not hesitate to reach out to your herd health veterinarian. Additionally, if you or someone you know is experiencing isolation, distress or is feeling overwhelmed because of the times we are in, please reach out. We are all in this together and can benefit tremendously from opening up and talking through the challenges facing us and our industry.

Feeling stressed is normal, and sometimes it's helpful. It can act as a catalyst to give us the energy or motivation to complete a task. However, if stress doesn't go away, isn't short-term, or builds up to an unmanageable point it can become debilitating. In farming you don't have to look too far to find sources of stress. Whether it's financial worry, angst over a succession plan, fears for the growing season, or market stressors, things can really start to add up. Feeling overwhelmed is as harmful to your physical health as your mental wellbeing, so it's important to recognize signs of stress and develop coping strategies before it gets to that point.

Stress can have damaging effects on your mind, body, and behaviour. Here is a chart highlighting some of the 'symptoms of stress.' This comes from the book Difficult Times: Stress on the Farm which is free to download on the OMAFRA Mental Health First Aid Kit site.

“Stress cannot be cured, but it can be handled”

There are many resources available to help us handle stress, even in times of social distancing. Having someone to talk to is not only important for venting, asking for advice and gaining perspective, but it can also remind us that everyone deals with stress at some point or another. Some things are totally out of our control, and it does no good to stress about them. Reminding yourself of this simple fact can help you redirect your attention to things you can have an influence on. There are many resources online to offer support. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has developed the Mental Health for Farmers- First Aid Kit. These can be accessed at:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/mental-health.htm

Physical	Emotional	Behavioural
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased angry blow ups	<input type="checkbox"/> Overeating/neglect diet
<input type="checkbox"/> Stomach problems (constipation or diarrhea)	<input type="checkbox"/> Frustration	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased smoking/ alcohol drinking
<input type="checkbox"/> Chest pain	<input type="checkbox"/> Impatience	<input type="checkbox"/> Change in sleeping habits
<input type="checkbox"/> Rapidly beating heart/change in blood pressure	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty controlling emotions	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty relaxing; restlessness/lack of concentration
<input type="checkbox"/> Grinding/clenched teeth	<input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn from others
<input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble adapting to changing circumstances
<input type="checkbox"/> Drop in sexual interest	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts	<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness
		<input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination
		<input type="checkbox"/> Short tempered
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcastic arguments
		<input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive buying/ gambling

Everyone views stressful situations differently and has different coping skills. No two people respond exactly the same way to a given situation. Understanding ourselves and our reactions to stress, allows us to learn how to handle stress more effectively.

For anyone in need of immediate help, please call the mental health helpline at 1-866-531-2600 or the province-wide crisis line at 2-1-1. If you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed, try to prioritize your own self-care as much as possible during this busy time of year. Eat well, drink lots of water and get enough sleep. Get off the farm for a coffee and treat yourself. Call a friend, check in on a neighbour, and know when to ask for help.