



Just a reminder to start thinking about rabies vaccinating the farm dogs if needed, and purchasing your license for 2010. Beat the rush. When calling in or asking your veterinarian please let us know which dogs or if this is a new pet. Both Sanilac and Huron County begin selling licenses December 1st.

## Time to Regroup.....Dr. Mark Fox and Dr. Michelle Borek

With a beautiful November, we hope you all had excellent weather and yields for your harvest. As the new forages are settling, it is time to decide what to feed and when. We are seeing a transition away from one lactation group TMR feeding now that rBST has been out of the loop for a year or so. As we visit farms we have noticed the “heavy” cow has returned. The question is what to do to avoid these cows. One suggestion is to create a maintenance diet group for these cows, Dr. Mike Allen from MSU spoke at a conference in Iowa this past month about how to feed and manage these groups. He noted that single TMR groups were convenient, simple and worked well w/rBST. However, they limit peak milk yields, are expensive, have potential for a large amount of Nitrogen waste and predisposed to excessive weight gain especially in mid-late lactation. A maintenance diet is used to maintain body condition **and** milk yield. Dr. Allen even noted that their intakes may increase as highly fermentable feeds have higher proportionate concentrations that limit intakes. The maintenance diet should have forages that last longer in the rumen like grass hay or grass silage or low lignin corn silage. The grain portion should be less rapidly fermentable to control propionate production.

Who belongs in this maintenance group? Cows with a body condition score of 3.25 or greater need to be in a group. In years past, the “low” group was based on milk production, DIM or days pregnant. As mentioned before, we are maintaining BCS and milk yield. It is imperative to body condition score cows to move into this group. Every cow must be scored, not just that fat ones or the thin ones. Our eyes catch the outliers, not the average cow. Goals for mid lactation body condition on a 1-5 scale is between a 2.75 and 3.25. Cows should calve a 3.0 - 3.5, milk off 0.5 – 1.0 BCS and then maintain around a 3.0. A good time to body condition score cows is at herd check or as the opportunity arises that all cows can be visualized up close like after milking. It is also important that one person scores the cows or two that closely agree. When all the cows are scored and the results recorded, a bell shaped curve should be present with most animals in the 2.5 - 3.5 range with a few on either side. If there are excessive numbers greater than 3.5 or less than 2.5, consult with your veterinarian and nutritionist about your rations and groups. By providing a maintenance diet with more forages like hay/haylage, beet pulp and less rapidly fermentable grain sources, the risk of over conditioning is reduced and cost savings are possible. Money is not wasted on the expensive energy components that they are not putting into milk but rather on excessive weight gain. The goal is to have fewer “fat” cows at calving, less metabolic disease (Metritis, Ketosis, DA’s) and a “snappy” return to high milk production and successful reproduction.

If you are interested in deciding if you need a maintenance group, talk with your veterinarian about body condition scoring your herd. Based on your results you can decide from there.

Dr. Mike Allen has an article “Time to Regroup” in the Michigan Dairy Review. You can find a link to this article on our web page [www.deckervillevet.com](http://www.deckervillevet.com). If you need assistance finding the article contact Carrie.

### Drop Ship—Limited shipments end of December

The holidays will again pose complications on ordering. The last 2 weeks of December orders can only be taken on Monday the 21st & 28th.. We will need to be planning ahead. I realize it is difficult to maintain an inventory this time of year...but shipping becomes increasingly difficult with the cold weather. Products received frozen need to be reported immediately, refrigerate do not leave out at room temperature, and wait to hear from me I will check with the manufactures. Order forms can now be downloaded from our web site! Thank you so much for your support and business this year. We hope to continue to be your dairy supply source. Have a wonderful holiday season..... Helen