**NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – JANUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER**

**HAPPY 2018**

With the quota that has been given and the forecast of more to come it is time to look at what can be done to ensure you are getting the most milk from each cow in your herd.

It pretty much comes down to forage quality and cow comfort. Without these you can make milk, but it comes at a cost through cow stress. Generally, when you feed high quality forages you will see:

* Higher milk components
* Less metabolic disease
* Fewer feet problems
* Cows lasting longer
* Reduced feed purchases

(Miner Institute Dairy Day 2017)

More digestible forages are important as they require less chewing time as well as they move more quickly through the rumen. The rumen throughput leads to more dry matter intake (DMI). It used to be thought that cows needed forage length about 3-4” (the width of their mouth) to provide “scratch factor” in the rumen and reduce the chance of sorting at the feed bunk. Now it is believed that forages can be chopped or fed at lengths as short as 1”. The reason being that it is the length of feed once it has been chewed and ready to swallow. If fed at these shorter lengths then cows can eat more, spend less time at the bunk and more time resting.

This years feed inventory, especially corn silage has proven to be lower in NDF digestibility then other years. This information is available on your forage analysis. For every 1% increase in NDF digestibility there can be a 0.2 kg increase in DMI and a 0.2 kg increase in milk production. Average corn silage NDF 30-hour digestibility is around 57%.

Cow comfort importance is critical. Stall management, stocking density, feed bunk management to name a few. These are preferences for stall bases:

1. Sand
2. Foam mattress
3. Rubber fitted mattress
4. Waterbed
5. Solid rubber matts (Wagner 2003)

There are also differences between 1st lactation and 2nd plus lactation cattle. Heifers eat more slowly, are much less dominant and avoid stalls that mature cows often use. When there are stocking issues heifers give less milk, rest less, and lose more weight all due to reduced DMI. Heifers need space.

***COLD WEATHER***

*It is cold outside!! Put calf jackets on newborns until they are at least one month old. Even calves indoors. Let all the calories you feed your calves promote growth and health and less toward staying warm. When calves lie down, you should not be able to see their legs in the straw.*

**HOOF TRIMMING COURSE**

We will be conducting a hoof trimming course this March. The dates are likely to be March 29/30. It will be run by Vic Daniels, a trimmer from south western Ontario. We will be able to accommodate 10 participants. Please let us know if you are interested.

Once the schedule is finally set and costs organized we will let you know the full cost per person. We will require a deposit to hold your place. Our initial thoughts are a cost between $750 - $1000 per person. If there is a continuation of the Growing Forward Program this course should be eligible.