

# Care in dry period gives pay-off in next lactation

With putting on more cows and increasing yields by well over 1000 litres, you might expect fertility to take a nose dive. Not so at the Millsco herd where Jonathan Scott pays close attention to rations!

Jonathan Scott returned to Hanmer Farm, in Wrexham, in July 2008 having spent some years working for Genus. His father, David, was recovering from a serious illness, but with mum Pauline and Jonathan's wife Emma he formulated a plan to capitalise on the good genetic base of their Millsco Holstein herd.

Hanmer Farm is a tenanted holding with its 104ha (257 acres) ranging from sandy to peat, and as David says "none of it is flat". An extra 30ha (75 acres) away from home is used for maize, which is grown on contract, delivered in and clamped.

The latest figures paint quite a picture. In just over a year, milk yields have risen from 7860 litres per cow to 9067, on twice a day milking. Production will continue to rise and should hit 10,000 litres in the near future.

Cow numbers have increased from 137 to 158. By February there will be 200 in the herd after the completion of new buildings, and there are plans to increase to 300 cows.

Calving interval has dropped from 435 days to a CIS predicted 380 and the average number of days in milk has gone from 207 to 171. This improved performance



From left: Alan Hornby, Emma Scott, Jonathan Scott and baby Lily, and David Scott.

has been brought about by better dry cow management, better nutrition and a focus on fertility.

Jonathan's philosophy on dry cows is "they should have a complete rest and spend their time either eating or lying down".

At Hanmer Farm there is a purpose built, loose-housed dry cow building. The cows are foot trimmed at drying off and put onto a diet comprising half straw

and half of whatever TMR mix the high yielding cows are eating at the time. During the summer, the gate is left open so they can wander out into an adjacent paddock, something they only seem to like doing at night, returning to their straw bed before morning. Just before calving, the cows are moved into the adjacent pen and the diet is stepped up in energy and non-

degradable proteins, but remains consistent to keep changes down to a minimum.

"This consistency through the dry period and lack of stress pays real dividends in terms of cow health and better fertility after calving," says Jonathan.

Carrs Billington nutritionist Alan Hornby was brought in by Jonathan to advise on diets to lift milk yields, something achieved by

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raising the base energy level and increasing use of non-degradable proteins, particularly protected AminoMax Rape and Soya products, in a tailor-made blend.

Over 20kg of maize per cow per day will be fed this winter, along with grass silage and blend to provide M+27 litres out of parlour.

A high energy 16 or 18% cake is fed in parlour to ensure overall protein levels do not exceed 18% in the total diet. By relying heavily on protected proteins, Jonathan and Alan aim to keep urea levels low in the bloodstream which they believe will aid fertility by reducing embryo loss.

Destiny, Ixex and Kokon varieties of maize were grown in 2009 and yields were very impressive, with some fields producing 54t/ha (22t/acre). Four cuts of silage are taken from high yielding two year Italian ryegrass leys, which fit in well with the cropping plan which includes five-year grazing mixtures. All cows graze throughout the summer, but with rising yields, the fresh-calved cows will spend more time inside this year to ensure consistent feed intakes, while freeing up more acres for silage.

Jonathan, David and one part-timer, who does half the milkings, are the only staff on the unit, so time is a valuable asset. To help identify bulling cows, the Heat-time fertility detection service was introduced after discussions with vet Mike Christie from Lambert, Leonard and May.

Jonathan describes it as a "fantastic piece of kit" and since Heat-time arrived, 84% of cows presented for PD have been found in-calf. Many cows only seem to come on heat for a short time at night and with the best will in the world these will not be seen by staff. By providing information on when the heat period started, each cow can be served at the optimum time.

New buildings have been designed, Dutch Comfort cubicles and mattresses fitted and a 2.5m litre slurry store is already in use.

It is refreshing to see such confidence and enthusiasm within the industry and, with plans now in place, Hanmer Farm looks set for a bright future which will give the Scott family a good long-term business.



To cater for the proposed herd expansion a new 2.5m litre slurry store has been build.

## Ecolab



Protected proteins are fed which help keep blood urea levels low and reduce embryo loss.