Charmany Breeding Program

Over the past several weeks, we have remembered Tootsie’s passing by reflecting on the importance of maintaining the herd’s excellent cow status. We have discussed the potential of our new heifers and our run of successful calving. This week we will look into the heifer and whole herd breeding programs. Second year vet student Travis Kuhlka has undertaken the task of implementing heifer breeding at Bookhout and improving the dairy breeding protocols at Charmany.

According to Travis, the facilities and full-time staff at Bookhout provide an excellent environment for establishing a natural breeding program. Calves born at Charmany are transferred to Bookhout after weaning to be raised. At about 12 to 13 months, the heifers will be observed for cycling. When Bookhout staff detects a heifer’s natural heat, she will be artificially inseminated. Pregnant heifers will return to Charmany shortly before freshening for observation and calving. Travis is excited about the Bookhout breeding protocol because heifers generally breed well based on natural heat detection making timed AI protocols like OVSYNCH unnecessary.

Travis also has a hand in the breeding program at Charmany. As we have discussed in recent newsletters, the teaching herd has relatively high twinning and abortion rates and a high rate of breeding back. The current breeding program relies on the OVSYNCH protocol in combination with reproductive status information gathered during the fourth year theriogenology rotation. This approach attempts to satisfy two goals: 1) getting the cows bred on time to maintain productivity, and 2) providing an excellent learning experience for students. Unfortunately, sometimes these two goals don’t coincide perfectly. Travis plans to update the timed AI protocols to better integrate information gathered from theriogenology students. Ideally, pasture utilization and observation of cows would also improve heat detection, but is difficult to implement. The hope is that tightening up the protocol will increase efficiency in breeding and raise productivity. What’s more, while the new protocol may become a bit more complicated to meet individual cows’ needs, the cows themselves will benefit from better reproductive management. And who can argue with that goal!

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This week I’d like to talk about patient care from a cow perspective. Me and the rest of the gals in the herd really like the way the new students have become comfortable with our routine—especially during milking. For instance, it’s really nice in the mornings to get a little warning before those cold fingers reach for our warm teats. Also, students have been calling our names’ or leaning against us before they begin milking, and let me tell you, it really makes a difference! We quite like how friendly the students have been when getting us up lately…without a bunch of yellin’ or kickin’…we really like that. We also like it when the students help us find our stalls (the new heifers especially like it) ‘cause the quicker we find our stalls, the faster we can eat! (Yum!) All in all, we are developing a very healthy respect for all the new students. Thank you, Red

Red’s Corner

Oh, and by the way...

There are still THREE positions left on the barn crew team. This is a GREAT opportunity for you to get hands-on experience working with me and the rest of the gals in the herd. Contact The Big Moo (Dr. Goodger) if interested. We’d love to see ya around the barn and help teach you the ways of a top notch dairy herd.
**Cases of Interest in the Barn...**

**SADIE**
Sadie calved overnight, Wednesday, October 6th. She had a healthy bull and is currently being monitored for mastitis. Our normal fresh cow protocol is to culture the milk at the fifth milking and do CMTs to further assess the udder for about 5 consecutive days. In Sadie’s case the herd health team made a good clinical decision and began to CMT test early because she was producing abnormal milk. The CMT results showed one quarter with a CMT of two. So, while it was a good decision to begin testing early, the situation presented a clinical dilemma. Within the first three milkings you get colostrum, which may also contain blood and Orbaseal (a commercial teat sealant). These three components make it difficult to assess whether you truly have a CMT of 2, or just a reaction with the colostrum. To make a decision on whether to treat or not, there needs to be a pattern of abnormal CMT results to confirm that there truly is an infection. If you decide to treat on just one or two CMT results, you will have to throw away the milk for about a week, which is expensive and may upset the farmer. Overall, we have found that culturing the milk and getting the results by day seven is the most reliable method. This way even if the culture is negative we can still CMT for another 5-7 days to establish a pattern and further assess the situation. The exception would be if the cow begins to show other clinical signs (see Balou below) such as fever and udder edema, then obviously the decision would be to treat.

**BALOU**
“Balou” also calved Wednesday, October 6th, at about 6:00 pm. She is being treated as a fresh heifer for mastitis. She gave birth to a heifer named “Boo” (appropriate October name, don’t ‘ya think?).

This case turned out to be another good call by the herd health crew, although “Balou” presents a different problem in monitoring. In addition to mastitis, she also has udder edema and inflammation. We know from research that the best way to assess the progress of intramammary treatment is by the character of the quarter’s swelling and pain, and not necessarily the character of the milk. This is why we score the udder in addition to doing CMTs. In Balou’s case her mastitis was caused by a circulatory phenomena caused by the transition from a non-lactating to a lactating cow. Edema and inflammation from mastitis is found in many fresh cow cases, so the question then becomes, “how do we assess our treatment of this specific bug compared to all these other cases?” The answer lies with experience and knowing the difference between edema and inflammation. You can get this from milking a lot of cows and performing a lot of udder scores, or by asking the farmer what is normal for his particular cow. Finally, when you start doing udder scores on fresh cows, take the time to understand the differences between edema and inflammation and the normal fresh cow udder so you can get the best assessment possible. Great decisions Herd Health team! Keep up the good work.

**BLACKI**
Unfortunately, we have decided to cull “Blackie.” The decision was difficult, but based on many important factors: 1) she is nine years old, 2) two weeks ago she aborted twins about two months early and has been going through severe metritis from two retained placentas, 3) her uterus has very poor tone, 4) she milks in only three quarters because of a chronic Klebsiella infection, 5) she is a chronic leaker and has been leaking since the abortion, and 6) we need the stall.

Looking at this list, you might ask, “are there any positives?” Well yes, there are a few. She has had good feet and legs (minus one sole ulcer and shoe), and her estimated milk potential before the abortion was 25,000 pounds. As of now she is giving 20-30 lbs of milk a day, and that is mainly a reaction to her posilac injections. The chances of her reaching her potential now are limited because of the leaking. We think the most her udder could hold would be about 60 lbs of milk, and that would only put her at a potential milk yield of 18,000 lbs! We could probably milk her for one more lactation, but we need the stall, and in a small herd like this you have to make the decision in terms of tradeoffs. The heifer that will be coming in to take her place is “Sonny” whose grandmother is “Sparkle” and mother is “Susan,” both 33,000 to 36,000 ME cows. With all factors weighed, the decision was to cull “Blacki,” as it is the best decision for the herd.
Employment Opportunities

· Interested in gaining experience working with dairy cows? Then boy do we have the opportunity for you! You can join the milking crew at the Charmany Teaching Facility and work the AM or PM milking shifts. Weekday shifts are from 5:00 am to 7:00 am and from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Weekend shifts are from 5:00 am to 12:00 pm and from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm. Interested students should contact Dr. Bill Goodger at (608) 770-1448.

· One further note on employment is that we can save 50% in student salary expenses (about $20,000 per year) if students apply for work study (about 90% of veterinary students are probably eligible). These added funds would not only allow more students access to the herd, but would also provide support for clinics, projects, and clinical upgrades to our facility which would enhance the experience for all students. Below is information about work study from the campus work study office in financial aid.

** The Work-Study Program does not determine where you work. It is up to you to determine where you’d like to work and what type of work you’d be interested in. The Federal Work-Study Program (FWSP) employee’s will be glad to discuss with you what your interests are and what employment options are available to you but you will need to contact the employers directly to inquire about job availabilities.

Having accepted Work-Study will benefit you primarily in two ways: first, since employers only pay 50 cents of every dollar earned by a student, work-study students are highly sought after employees and second, any work-study monies earned are not counted and considered as earned income when you apply for next year’s financial aid. Normally a student’s earnings are considered as earned income and your next year’s financial aid award is reduced by that amount.

If you decide to work on campus, ANY job at the UW automatically qualifies as a work-study position. You should always let a UW-employer know that you have accepted a work-study award, because again, it makes you an even more desirable hire to them. Having said this, some UW employers require that you have work-study. These listing can be found under the “UWWR” section.

If you need to contact someone at the UW-SVM Teaching Herd Barn, call (608) 265-3558.
Please direct correspondence regarding the Charmany Teaching Herd or the newsletter to:
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