

Checklist for Transition Cow Management

Use this checklist to help you implement the key steps for a successful transition period.

1 Feed the transition diet for as close to 21 days as possible

- This relies on accurate calving dates. Early pregnancy testing all cows and heifers by a skilled operator between 5-15 weeks of gestation will enable this.

2 Sourcing and testing forage

- Obtain a single consignment of forage from one source if possible.
- Test forage with both a standard feed test and wet chemistry mineral analysis.
- Test pasture if it will comprise more than 2kg DM/cow/day in the transition diet.

3 Balancing the diet*

- Attend a Putting Transition Cow Management into Practice workshop.
- Work with a nutrition advisor or use the Transition Diet Milk Fever Risk Calculator to adjust feeding levels to meet energy and protein requirements and manage milk fever risk.
- If feeding a concentrate designed for milkers, check that it doesn't contain bicarbonate as a buffer.

* Do you plan on using a commercial lead feed pellet, DIY anionic salts (e.g. mag chloride) or something else? Use the same concentrate type as you will use after calving (e.g. grain or pellets).

4 Choosing your springer paddock(s)

- Chose paddocks that have not been irrigated with effluent or received heavy applications of potassium fertilisers. Rotating calving paddocks is good practice to avoid nutrient loading.

- Repair leaking troughs, boggy gateways and restrict access to dams to manage mastitis risk. Also scrape or wash down feed pad regularly (if applicable).
- Calculate daily pasture mass and strip graze to manage intakes especially if it will comprise more than 2kg DM/cow/day in the transition diet.
- If applicable, ensure you have enough trough space (at least 75cm per cow) and/or hay rings (at least 1 per 20 cows) to ensure all cows and heifers have equal access to transition diet.
- Use a mineral dispenser if putting DIY salts (e.g. mag chloride) in water troughs. These are available from most rural stores. Calibrate regularly according to manufacturer's directions.

5 Staff

- Ensure staff have been adequately trained in their required tasks and simple, written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are available to them.

6 Feeding out

- Ensure you've made realistic allowances for wastage (may be up to 35% when fed on bare ground).
- Start milking cows and heifers early if they have udder oedema or are running milk.

If feeding concentrates through the dairy:

- Check and calibrate feed systems regularly.
- Observe for mastitis and apply teat disinfectant to all surfaces of teats daily.

7 Monitor the success of your program

- Use Cow Health Problems at Calving Tally Sheet or existing herd recording system to monitor cow health.
- Use Transition Program Review Worksheet to assess how well the program worked and plan any changes.

For more information on transition cow management visit dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/animal-management/fertility/transition-cow-management