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## TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

### Scours: Are they infectious?



Infectious scours can be caused by nutritional issues, such as inconsistent milk timing, incorrect temperature, and changes in total solids in milk. To address scours, a dairy should analyze the age of scouring calves and their symptoms, and implement preventative measures to reduce the risk of other calves getting scours. Preventing multiple pathogens is crucial, and prioritizing colostrum management, providing immediate immune protection, and keeping areas clean and sanitized can help reduce calf mortality and morbidity.

<https://www.agproud.com/articles/57479-scours-when-and-how-it-hits-the-fan>

### Heat Stress on Transition Cows: Are we prepared?



The transition from pregnancy to lactation in dairy cows is a challenging phase that affects various aspects of their lives. This period can lead to health issues, such as reduced feed intake, increased nutrient requirements, and stress due to moving cows to the pre-fresh pen, calving area, and then to the fresh group. Heat stress, which is a significant problem for Canadian dairy farms, adds to the already tough transition period.

Dry cows exposed to heat stress end up calving earlier, leading to shorter gestation length and reduced performance. Fresh cows are more sensitive to heat stress, with lower feed intake and increased disease occurrences. Reproduction also suffers when cows spend their transition period during heat stress conditions, with conception rates being 7 percentage points lower and pregnancy loss being 4.3 percentage points higher.

The best approach to reduce heat stress should be addressed **before** hotter days, including strategies of heat abatement, such as sprinklers and fans in the barn, and easy access to clean and fresh water. Feed strategies can counter these negative effects, such as increasing the density of the ration or using specific feed additives.

Although summer is almost over, there are still steps to take to ensure a smooth transition. Monitoring the herd closely, moving cows to the pre-fresh pen twice a week, and paying close attention to intake can help maintain a steady intake during the day. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure that strategies to maximize production for the upcoming incentive days are not causing more harm than good, as increasing calving numbers and reducing culling could cause overcrowding in the dry and fresh pens, which can reduce animal well-being, increase competition, and add more challenges to the transition period.

<https://www.agproud.com/articles/60092-the-double-challenge-for-dairy-cows-overcoming-a-hot-transition>

# Chasing Incentive Days?

<https://www.agproud.com/articles/59672-should-you-chase-incentive-days>

Dairy producers in Canada rely on their quota as a backbone for their business, ensuring consistency in sales, stabilizing prices, and directly generating new cash flow. Acquiring quota can be challenging due to high bid prices and limited availability. In Ontario, the DFO issues incentive days, which allow producers to ship an extra day to fill short-term increases in demand without longer-term implications. Producers have a complex relationship with these incentives, as they appreciate the chance to boost revenue but may be announced suddenly.

The cost of goods sold (COGS) is a key factor in understanding how much value should be placed on trying to fill extra quota days. If given three incentive days in a month, producers can sell approximately 10% more and increase their revenue by 10%. However, most of the expenses would be variable, such as more feed required for more milk per cow or to support more cows.

Scenario based on examples show that different approaches can impact the pie and slice size of a dairy producer's pie. For example, *Steady Eddie* decides not to fill the extra days, *Dumped Dan* overproduces in the spring to keep extra cows for the fall, and *Milk More Marie* delays dry-offs, culls, and calves in a few more cows. *Carl* plans to calve seven extra cows in advance and culls the extra cows in January after the incentives are over. *Betty* balances her ration with 200 grams of palm fat and calves four extra cows during the fall.



**TABLE 1** Revenue scenarios of incentive days production

Scenario	Quota	Incentive days per month	Months filled	Milk (kg)	Fat per cow (kg)	Cows milked	Feed cost per kg DM (\$)	Feed cost per cow per day (\$)	Care per cow per day (\$)	Fat kg per day produced	Over-produced (kg of fat)	Revenue (i.e., size of pie)	Cost of goods sold	Left	Gross margin (Size of pie slice compared to revenue)	Extra earned (Bigger slice)
<b>1. Steady Eddie</b>																
Do not attempt fill	100	3	0	36	1.51	66	0.36	8.07	6.11	99.79		\$763,496	\$341,596	\$421,900	55.3%	
<b>2. Dumping Dan</b>																
Over-produces for 6 months	100	0	0	34	1.43	73	0.36	7.74	6.11	104.24	4.24	\$381,748	\$184,517	\$197,231	51.7%	
Fill incentives	110	3	6	36	1.51	73	0.36	8.07	6.11	110.38		\$422,237	\$188,913	\$233,324	55.3%	
												\$803,986	\$373,430	\$430,556	53.6%	\$8,656
<b>3. Milk more Marie</b>																
Normal	100	0	0	36	1.51	66	0.36	8.07	6.11	99.79		\$381,748	\$170,798	\$210,950	55.3%	
Overcrowd to fill		3	6	33	1.39	80	0.36	7.57		110.88		\$424,165	\$199,728	\$224,437	52.9%	
												\$805,913	\$370,526	\$435,387	54.0%	\$13,487
<b>4. Calve more Carl</b>																
Normal	100	0	0	36	1.51	66	0.36	8.07	6.11	99.79		\$381,748	\$170,798	\$210,950	55.3%	
Fill	110	3	6	36	1.51	73	0.36	8.07	6.11	110.38		\$422,237	\$188,913	\$233,324	55.3%	
												\$803,986	\$359,711	\$444,274	55.3%	\$22,375
<b>5. Balanced Betty</b>																
Normal	100	0	0	36	1.51	66	0.36	8.07	6.11	99.79		\$381,748	\$170,798	\$210,950	55.3%	
Fill	110	3	6	36	1.58	70	0.39	8.57	6.11	110.88	*	\$423,332	\$187,537	\$235,795	55.7%	
												\$805,081	\$358,335	\$446,745	55.5%	\$24,846

## Assumptions of the Herd:

- 100 kilograms of quota
- Current production is 36 kilograms of milk, 4.2% butterfat, 3.3% protein, 5.95% other solids
- Feed cost is \$0.36 per kilogram of DM
- 150 DIM
- 66 Animals

While none of these scenarios are perfect, the concepts of revenue and margins may help make informed decisions. Overproducing milk is one of the fastest ways to decrease gross margin, and discarding milk costs Dan \$13,718 for six months. To determine if you tend to overproduce, consider how many days or kilograms you discard in a year and compare that with the number of extra days you may fill.

In conclusion, filling your base quota is essential for dairy producers in Canada, as it is the backbone of their business. Considering changes in expenses between different scenarios can help increase the size of your pie and manage expenses to maximize the size of your slice.