



TECH TALK

A Fresh Start Begins Before Calving

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Fresh cow success does not start in the fresh pen. It starts weeks before calving during the dry period, when the cow is preparing for one of the most demanding biological shifts of her production cycle.

Right now that matters more than ever. Replacement heifers are limited. Production costs remain high. Every cow that leaves the herd early represents lost potential, added expense, and another gap to fill. For dairy producers, helping cows move smoothly into the next lactation is not just a nutrition goal. It is a business priority.

This transition period is when pressure builds. Nutrient needs increase as lactation approaches, but dry matter intake often declines. That gap can contribute to negative energy balance and metabolic stress while the cow adapts to normal changes in immune function. (1)

Inflammation around calving can suppress appetite and alter nutrient metabolism. Scientific literature has associated this period with metabolic conditions such as ketosis, metritis, mastitis, and fatty liver disease. (2,3) Early metabolic challenges are associated with lower milk production, delayed pregnancy, and increased removal from the herd. (3) When the goal is to keep productive cows working longer, the dry period deserves more attention, not less.

Nutrition is one of the levers producers can pull. Supplementing with zinc, copper and manganese can enhance immunity, support reproduction, and mitigate cell damage during this high-stress window. (6) And don't forget. Trace mineral source can influence mineral availability and selected measured responses so selecting a highly available and absorbable mineral is critical. (4,5)

Management alongside nutrition can also really impact the success of the lactation period. Body condition, feed access, consistent intake, stocking density and environmental stress all shape how cows respond during transition. (1,2)

The takeaway is clear: waiting until cows freshen is waiting too long. A stronger start to lactation begins with dry-period decisions that support consistent intake, appropriate mineral status and lower stress before the maternity pen.

Want practical ideas for keeping productive cows in the herd longer? Join our October podcast for a discussion on mineral nutrition during transition.

Transition Success Starts With What She Absorbs

Date: October 14, 2026

Time: 12 PM CST

Link to Register: https://events.zoom.us/j/6~AoJH3ac8oT6M3lpZS79kQ09OZ83Qj7E-eWyWSt9lwv_CgvIL2bp0ldJ7xg

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