

Embryo Transfer – Recipient Management

Following collection, embryos can be transferred directly into synchronized recipients or frozen for transfer at a later date. Typically fresh transfers result in higher pregnancy rates with maiden heifers making the best recipients. The following advice relates to the management of recipients;

Selection

Heifer recipients should be at least 15 months old, weighing 370kg and 400kg for dairy and beef breeds respectively. These must be of a suitable frame size to carry to term and calve naturally. Cow recipients should have had no more than 4 calves, with a good breeding history and no record of ill health or poor fertility.

Health and Fertility

If cows are to be used as recipients these should be at least 10 weeks calved, clean and cycling normally (ideally 2 heats observed). A post natal check by a vet is advisable. Heifer recipients should be cycling regularly (at least two heats detected). The body condition score of heifer recipients should be 2.5, cows slightly higher at 2.5-3.

Management

A controlled management system should be in place six to eight weeks prior to transfer, continuing for at least six weeks post transfer. **AVOID CHANGE WHEREVER POSSIBLE.** Prospective recipients should be housed in small groups with a large emphasis on cow comfort. Stressful events such as spring turn out, autumn housing, foot trimming, worming, vaccinations, freezebranding, transport and mixing of groups should be avoided in this management period.

Nutrition

Plan the nutrition for the entire management period and avoid change wherever possible. Recipients should be on rising plane of nutrition, this is especially important with respect to energy and fibre. It is important to remember over conditioned recipients or those in poor condition have poor conception rates. The addition of beet pulp to the diet for at least four weeks before and six weeks after the transfer can be beneficial.

The feeding of long fibre is encouraged, this can be achieved by feeding hay, haylage, big bale silage and straw.

Large quantities of concentrates should be avoided (no more than 4kg at any one time). The conception rate of recipients at grass is often poor in comparison to housed recipients. Mineral supplementation is important and can be provided in the form of buckets, powder supplements, licks and boluses. Cosecure boluses are recommended for copper, selenium and cobalt (take care with additional supplementation of copper by other routes; copper toxicity is possible).

Infectious Disease

It is important to appreciate that diseases such as IBR, BVD, leptospirosis, Neospora caninum and Johne's Disease can have implications on conception rates and subsequent calf health. Veterinary advice should be sought if there is doubt over the disease status of prospective recipients.

Bought in recipients should be quarantined for at least six weeks on entering the farm. Their disease status should be determined before transfer.

Heat Synchronisation

This is necessary to prepare a number of recipients for transfer at a given time. Programmes for this can be prepared to run alongside donor programmes (fresh transfers) or as stand alone sessions (frozen transfers).



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