

Anco FIT



**Keep your cows agile
for resilience to stressors**

Dairy farming resilience – 3 reasons to keep your cows agile

The competitive environment for dairy farming requires farm management strategies for resilient production systems that can recover from or adapt to changes in environmental, social or economic conditions. There is probably no time like the current Covid 19 crisis that proves just how important resilience is for production systems.

Resilience applies to the farm, but also to individual animals. Several research programs in different parts of the world are investigating ways of genetically improving resilience in dairy cows. Resilience in the cow is determined by her adaptive capacity, which is the mechanism of the cow that empowers her to cope with internal or external disturbances, stressors or with changes in the environment.

Here are the top reasons for finding ways to Improve the adaptive capacity In dairy cows or In other words to keep dairy cows agile.

1) Consistent milk productivity and quality

Common stress reactions to stressors in the feed and in the environment, are oxidative stress, inflammation at the cellular level, shifts in rumen efficiency and reduction in feed intake. They will all lead to wasted energy and increased maintenance energy or a reduction in energy intake, which again will have consequences for milk yield and quality. Improving the adaptive capacity of dairy cows, will help to reduce the stress reactions In response to challenges and stressors and hence the Impact they can have on milk production and quality. As a result there are less fluctuations and less deviations from expected milk productivity and quality, which also means a more stable Income from cows.

2) Transition management

The transition period is a demanding time for dairy cows and when they fail to adapt physiologically to the demands of calving and the onset of milk production, the resulting metabolic stress leads to transition cow disorders with negative consequences for milk production, reproduction efficiency and longevity. Improving the adaptive capacity in dairy cows can enable the dairy cow to weather the transition period more successfully.

3) Shortages in qualified labour

One of the biggest pain points of dairy farms today is attracting skilled labour. Farmers are finding it difficult to get people to work on farms. It is even more difficult to source domestic labour and many dairy farmers are relying on foreign workers within their workforce. So the Covid 19 crisis and new immigration laws can exacerbate the shortage in qualified labour on dairy farms. A shortage in skilled labour means that caring for cow health and optimal performance becomes more challenging. One solution to this is to breed and manage for resilient cows that are easier to manage. Feeding for improved adaptive capacity to Increase resilience In dairy cows can make a difference to the amount of care a cow requires and thus to the amount of labour needed on the farm.

Nutritional solutions

New nutritional concepts, such as gut agility activators, are designed to support the adaptive capacity and keep animals agile by nutritional means for improved resilience.

The gut agility activator Anco FIT helps the cow to adapt to nutritional and environmental challenges more efficiently by minimising stress reactions such as oxidative stress and reduced feed intake, that would otherwise impact performance, health and wellbeing of the cow. Heat stress, transition period and mycotoxins are known factors which normally lead to increased oxidative stress and or a reduction in feed intake.

Keep yourself and your cows agile

The safest bet to keep yourself and your cows in the game in the face of unpredictability and change is to support and manage the adaptive capacity of your cows and of yourself. In other words, agility or the ability to adapt to challenges and change is key to longer term success. Staying open to continuous learning and new technologies will help to keep yourself agile. Rethinking how we breed and feed cows to foster resilience will keep cows agile. And there are already great technologies out there that can help monitor the progress we make in this. ■