



VCNZ Statement on the Induction of Calving in Cattle

Introduction

The non-therapeutic induction of calving as a management practice in dairy and beef cattle raises significant animal welfare concerns and must not be undertaken.

The induced calving of an individual animal with a health condition necessitating premature delivery of the calf is permissible.

Requirements

From 1 June 2015 the non-therapeutic induction of dairy and beef cattle for management purposes must not be carried out unless dispensation has been obtained from the farmer's dairy supply company and DairyNZ.

Appendices 1 and 2 set out the circumstances where a farmer may apply to their respective dairy company, via their veterinarian, for a short-term dispensation to carry out inductions.

In situations where dispensation has been obtained, veterinarians must report their induction activities to DairyNZ in the format required. Early in the planning process and before any cows are induced, the veterinarian must inform the client about the need to report the information required by Dairy NZ. Because this involves reporting client information to a third party, the veterinarian must obtain the client's permission, (in writing where possible). If permission is declined by the client then the veterinarian must not proceed with the inductions.

Records must be provided to the owner/manager/person-in-charge, clearly identifying the ear tag numbers of individually treated cows, the trade names of induction RVMs and the quantities and dates of individual treatments including their withholding period (WHP).

Technical requirements – based on Industry [“Operational Guidelines: Induction of Calving”](#)

Veterinarians must also:

- have met with the owner/manager/person-in-charge to agree and sign off the induction list and management plan no later than 20 days before the start of inductions
- keep the necessary records - those detailing RVM authorisation and those records required to demonstrate compliance with the relevant dairy company's Risk Management Plan and make these available for audit as required
- ensure that the planning has commenced sufficiently in advance of the initiation of the induction programme to ensure that cows meet required minima of body condition and that sufficient feed is available
- ensure that, at the time of the first induction injection, the cows to be induced: will be between 3 and 8 years old (inclusive); no more than 84 days (12 weeks) from their expected calving date; and no less than 56 days (8 weeks) from their expected calving date
- advise their clients that induced cows must be well fed and should be offered at least the ration for lactating cows in order to maintain appropriate condition
- ensure that potential candidate cows for induction have been pregnancy tested either by ultrasound examination (by a competent and experienced operator) or

manual palpation performed at an appropriate time when the stage of pregnancy can be accurately estimated; noting that the client also needs to be advised that if, at any stage during the programme a cow is suspected not to be pregnant, her pregnancy status must be re-verified

- advise their clients who are purchasing pregnant cows and who want to induce them after purchase, that they will need to provide the relevant documentation (i.e. veterinary certificate with pregnancy information) to confirm that the cows are eligible for induction
- advise Dairy NZ if they are aware of a situation where prior approval to induce cattle had been granted and these cattle were subsequently on-sold to the veterinarian's client
- consider the availability and experience of farm staff to ensure that induced animals can be cared for properly
- ensure that induced cows have been marked clearly for the management of both welfare risks (ability to identify and respond rapidly to symptoms of ill health in treated animals) and residue risks (ability to identify treated cows easily during milking routines)
- advise their clients that following the initiation of an induction programme, the treated cows must be inspected at least every 8 hours
- have, at the time that the induction list and the management plans are agreed, discussed the plans for calf euthanasia, including the methods and the necessary competency of identified personnel that will undertake the task
- advise their clients that:
 - induced calves that are born alive must be euthanised immediately in a humane manner in accordance with section 5.10 of the [Code of Welfare for Dairy Cattle, June 2014](#). This prohibits killing calves by a blow to the head except in unforeseen or unexpected situations – which do not apply in induction situations
 - the euthanised calves must be disposed of according to relevant territorial authority requirements
- advise their clients that the milk from induced cows must be withheld from supply for human food (including colostrum supply) until at least 4 days or 8 milkings after the cows have calved; or the withholding period of the induction drug whichever is longest.

Note: The use of the word “must” in the VCNZ Code of Professional Conduct and related VCNZ Statements indicates the minimum standard which all veterinarians are required to adhere to and may be measured against.

*Statement first issued by VCNZ on 6 September 2011
Reviewed and amended, May 2015
Amended to include zero tolerance for non-therapeutic inductions*

Appendix 1: Induction Dispensations

Issued by the current parties to the Industry Operational Guidelines on Induction of Calving – NZVA, DCANZ, Federated Farmers and Dairy NZ

For specific circumstances outside a farmer's control that have a direct impact on reproductive performance (e.g. adverse climatic event, disease outbreak), farmers may apply to their respective dairy company, via their veterinarian, for a short-term dispensation to carry out inductions (see requirements table below).

The dispensation request must be accompanied by good evidence of the direct impact on reproductive performance, and of the mitigation steps taken to manage the situation and avoid a repeat event. Dispensation will not be granted for inductions to compensate for an increased culling rate.

Dispensation requests are reviewed, and approved or declined, by the dairy company. An appeal process is available. In 2015 a review panel will be set up to ensure consistency across all dairy companies.

With the new limit in mind, farmers can make informed decisions around reproduction, culling and herd purchasing, and be vigilant about scanning and pregnancy dates for cows. To help prepare for the 2015/16 calving, farmers have been encouraged to get further advice from their veterinarian.

Veterinarians can contact Nita Harding, DairyNZ (technical policy advisor) for further information nita.harding@dairynz.co.nz or ph (07) 858 3735.

Primary justification for exemption	Dispensation requirements for exceptional circumstances for 2015/16 and onwards
AB failure	Farmer must have clear evidence that mating performance was being managed and monitored in a timely fashion, so any issues were identified early and appropriate remedial action was taken. If DIY, must demonstrate that the operator's prior performance was satisfactory and the operator will need to retrain. If an AB company technician was used, this must be supported by a letter from the AB company with sufficient detail to support the request. Such letters will be valid for one year only.
Farmer health	Requests to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There must be clear evidence of an impact on reproductive performance. Records of reproductive performance for previous years will be required.
Severe weather event, earthquakes and other natural events	Requests to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There must be clear evidence of an impact on reproductive performance. Records of reproductive performance for previous years will be required.
Falsified records pertaining to purchased animals	Requests will need to show deliberate falsification of records. It is essential to demonstrate that follow-up action is being taken with the provider of the records.

BVD

Need to demonstrate significant negative impact (reduction of 10% in 6-week in-calf rate and/or 5% increase in not in-calf rate) between successive years, evidence of active and robust management of BVD at a herd level prior to the outbreak and a robust plan for the ongoing management of BVD. Dispensation may be applied for annually for no more than 2 years in total and only if an impact can be demonstrated in a second year.

The criteria being applied by dairy companies in the review of applications include the following:

1) There is clear evidence of robust BVD management prior to a problem occurring. This includes routine monitoring at least yearly, an implemented biosecurity plan, vaccination where appropriate, and due diligence for all classes of animals entering the milking herd from outside (bulls, purchased cows, returning R2 animals).

2) There needs to be clear evidence of BVD having a negative impact on the reproductive performance of the herd. Since many factors may impact reproductive performance, this is not always easy to prove. To be able to argue exceptional circumstances, the application requires robust evidence that other aspects of herd management are being well-managed.

3) The BVD management plan also needs to clearly show current BVD status and details as laid out in the attached Template for BVD Management Plan (see Appendix 2 below).

Other animal health issues

Only one-off, unusual cases outside the farmer's control will be considered. There must be evidence of veterinary involvement at the time, proof of its direct effect on reproduction and a herd management plan to prevent a recurrence. A case history will be required, laboratory reports if appropriate and a plan for ongoing management must be provided.

Appendix 2: Template for BVD management plan

Issued by the current parties to the Industry Operational Guidelines on Induction of Calving – NZVA, DCANZ, Federated Farmers and Dairy NZ

This template covers the key elements required for an agreed BVD management plan as a condition for dispensation for inductions.

Please note: this approach to BVD management planning is an abbreviated version designed to be the minimum required in relation to induction dispensations.

Please refer to the BVD Management Toolkit developed by the BVD Steering Committee for more detailed information about management of this disease (<http://www.controlbvd.org.nz>).

1) Assessment of current BVD status and key risk elements:

- Description of cows and herds on milking platform
- Description of young stock, dry stock and carry-overs
- Arrangements regarding support land for grazing young stock, dry stock and carry-over cows (and associated risks of BVD)
- Arrangements regarding service bulls
- Results of BVD milk tests in recent seasons
- Results of other BVD testing e.g. of young stock and carry-overs
- Vaccination programme.

2) Action plan – this will arise according to the areas of risk identified in the assessment above. The attached table is provided as an example and would be modified depending on the individual circumstance.

Action	Who	Date
1) Milking cows – bulk milk monitoring programme – and individual blood sampling of cows that did not contribute to the vat on the test day.	John	1st November 2012
2) R2 heifers – vaccination.	Charles	1st July 2012
3) R1 heifers – pooled test for antibody to determine exposure; if evidence of a PI, antigen testing to eliminate.	Charles and vet	30th June 2012
4) Calves born in 2012 – all calves kept have antigen test from pooled samples taken at calf disbudding.	Mary and vet	30th September 2012
5) Service bulls purchased – testing for antigen as a condition of sale; vaccination on arrival.	John	30th September 2012
6) Biosecurity – outrigger fences installed along boundary at run-off to prevent nose-to-nose contact.	Charles	1st November 2012

Sign-off:

I agree to complete the above actions within the given timeframe in order to manage BVD within my herd.

Herd owner:

Veterinarian:

Acknowledgements: information to develop this template was provided by the BVD Steering Committee and Clutha Vets