

Webinar summary: Setting the cow up for success – Transition cow management – Part 2

This webinar covers how to measure and manage a successful transition, with a strong focus on metabolic health, feed balance, cow condition, and practical on-farm tools to support cow recovery and performance.

In this webinar:

1. Measuring transition success

- Transition success is about more than avoiding metabolic disease – it's about setting cows up to recover fast, cycle early, and reach peak milk quickly.
- Visual and blood-based markers like condition loss, NEFA levels, rumination minutes, and energy at calving all provide insight into whether cows are metabolically primed for lactation.
- Less than 2% post-calving metabolics and no pre-calving metabolics are realistic goals.

2. Liver, condition, and appetite

- Cows must maintain condition until very close to calving – any early condition loss spikes liver stress and increases risk of metabolic fallout.
- The liver must be “tuned” in the dry period to handle calving and lactation energy demands.
- Appetite is a key indicator – cows should be eating right up to calving. Standing off feed signals stress or energy imbalance.

3. Diet, minerals, and DCAD

- Diets should meet 80–110% of maintenance energy, with protein levels adjusted for cow condition (16–18% for over-conditioned cows).
- Fibre must sit above 45% NDF and be available ad lib to avoid hunger stress.
- Transition length (ideally 21 days) should match the diet change; more extreme shifts (e.g. fodder beet to maize) need longer ramps.
- Managing DCAD (dietary cation-anion difference) between +50 to +100 helps mobilise calcium and phosphorus safely. Over-acidification increases metabolic risk.

4. Phosphorus and calcium balance

- Both minerals must be fed in bioavailable forms.
- Pre-calving phosphorus needs to sit around 0.28–0.3% of the diet to avoid intake drops, higher SCCs, and poor energy metabolism.
- Pairing phosphorus with accessible calcium (like lime flour) supports mineral storage and use around calving.

5. Tools and additives to support transition

- Rumen stabilisers, buffers, and yeast help offset acid load and improve cow resilience post-calving.
- Vitamin D should be loaded during the dry period, not transition, to avoid interference with bone mobilisation.
- Betaine, B vitamins, and trace minerals support liver function and energy metabolism – especially in high-risk or over-conditioned cows.
- Chromium and boron can assist with condition loss prevention and mineral absorption respectively.

6. Reducing stress for better outcomes

- Close-up cows benefit from shelter, smaller mob sizes, and reduced feed competition.
- Feed access and mineral delivery must be consistent across the group.
- Poor weather, water access, and group hierarchy can all impact transition outcomes.

For more details, watch the webinar [\[link\]](#) or download the slide deck [\[link\]](#).