

Usual practices in reproduction



In response to a questionnaire from the *Table de concertation sur la reproduction*, participants to the training course *The Knowledge to Act: Reproduction* have shared information on some of their usual practices (between 800 and 1200 answers, depending on the question). These producers declare:

1. Having a voluntary waiting period:

YES: **90%**
NO: **10%**

2. Making exceptions for certain cows:

YES: **78%** Two-thirds of the YES make exceptions for less than 15% of their cows.
NO: **22%**

3. Percentage of cows bred within 21 days following the voluntary waiting period:

4. Frequency of veterinary visits to follow reproduction:

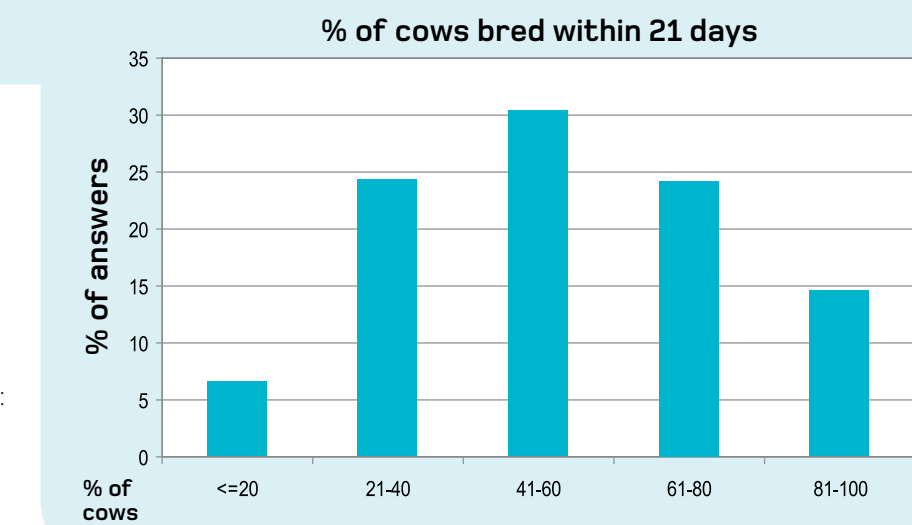
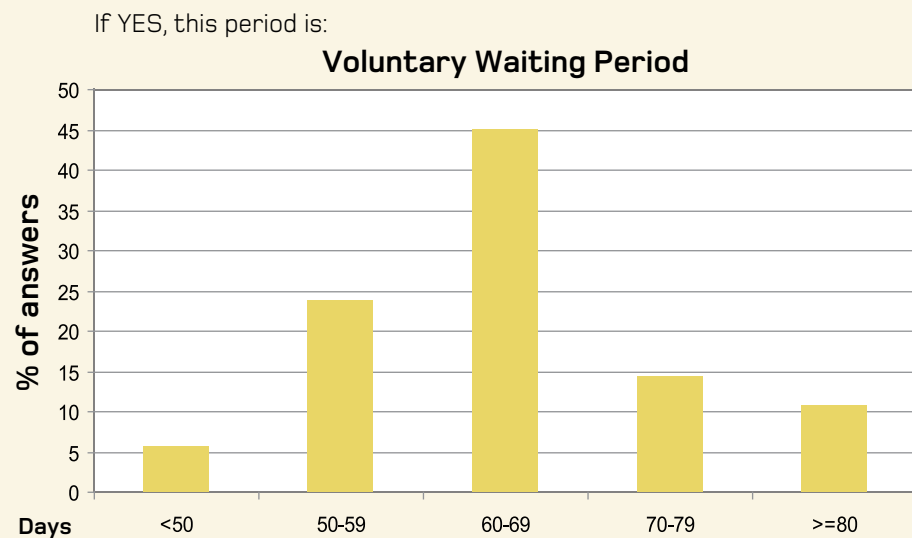
- Once a month: 49%
- Once every 2 or 3 weeks: 28%
- Once a month, in combination with a pregnancy diagnosis method by blood dosage: 16%
- Whenever I have time: 6%

5. Consider semen fertility and daughter fertility in their breeding choices:

YES: **61%**
NO: **39%**

6. Hold an annual meeting with reproduction advisors to take stock of the situation and fix objectives:

YES: **49%**
NO: **51%**



Thanks to the *Table de concertation sur la reproduction* for this initiative, and thanks to all responding producers.

Dairy Knowledge at your fingertips

valacta

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Welcome to dairy producers from the Atlantic Provinces

Bertrand Farmer, agr., General Manager

After 40 years of close collaboration, ADLIC, the Atlantic Dairy Livestock Improvement Corporation and Valacta, the Quebec Dairy Production Centre of Expertise, decided to merge their operations as of 2008. With the number of dairy producers steadily decreasing, while the demand for innovative services is on the rise, this decision will help provide better services to producers all across Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces. Human resources management, administration and computer services, as well as communications and customer service are now under the responsibility of Valacta. Laboratory analyses are still performed by the Prince Edward Island dairy laboratory.

The Valacta Board of Directors now includes ADLIC President Mr. Charles Curry, from Nova Scotia, as Board member and ADLIC Vice-President Mr. Dannie McKinnon, from Prince Edward Island, as an observer.

Valacta sends a hearty welcome to dairy producers from the Atlantic Provinces!

ADLIC-VALACTA agreement ratified on April 8



Mr. Charles Curry, representative for the Atlantic Provinces on Valacta's Board of Directors and Mr. Marcel Groleau, President of Valacta and of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec, signed the ADLIC-VALACTA agreement on April 8, 2008.

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Winning strategies for reproduction

Elaine Cloutier, agr., Training Coordinator, R&D

From January to April 2008, more than 1870 dairy producers in Quebec registered for *The Knowledge to Act: Reproduction* training course. Designed by the *Table de concertation sur la reproduction* (Quebec committee on bovine reproduction), and given by three experts (a practicing veterinarian, a specialist from CIAQ and a Valacta Strategic Advisor), this training provides targeted actions for success with reproduction*.

You missed this training session? It will be back next fall. Meanwhile, just complete this grid and start thinking.

Table 1
Reproduction in my herd: current situation and targets

	Quebec (HQ) averages	My herd	
		Current	Targets
N ^{br} of cows	56		
N ^{br} cows culled for reproduction problems	---		
Culling for reproduction (% of herd)	7,3		
Age at calving for heifers (months)	27		
Calving Interval (days)	427		
Calving – First breeding interval (days)	91		
Interbreeding interval (days)	49		

Source: Valacta database

Once you have the knowledge, it's time to act!

You followed our training session last winter? What strategies have you implemented since then? Have you talked this over with your advisors? Reproduction is a fairly complex issue. You increase your chances of success by calling on your experts. It is in your best interest to set up your own advisory team on reproduction, including your vet, genetics advisor, management advisor,

Valacta technician and advisor, plus any other partners you choose. The purpose of your advisory team is to help you better understand and act on the factors related to success in reproduction, by helping you set objectives and design strategies adapted to your reality.

First step: you must provide your team with precise and reliable data: exact dates of relevant events, breedings, pregnancy diagnostics, and body condition scores. This is ba-

sic material to draw a clear portrait of your herd's reproductive status.

Then, a no-nonsense review of your reproduction management will let you identify your strengths and the points that need improvement. All aspects are to be examined:

- What is the calving interval in your herd?
- How many cows are culled because of reproduction?



- Have you defined a voluntary waiting period? Do you manage to respect it?
- Heat detection or synchronisation? Who is in charge? How? When?
- How do you monitor serviced cows?
- Are pregnancy diagnostics recorded?
- What is your conception rate? The average number of breedings per cow?
- What is the situation with regard to heifer reproduction?

herd's reproduction parameters. His role is to help you analyse and understand reports; he is well placed to help you find the best available resources if any problem occurs.

Your entire advisory team can be summoned to help design your action plan. The plan states your objectives, defines the means to reach them, indicates the persons in charge, and details the working schedule and follow-up tools to be used. Having a step-by-step to-do list is essential when corrective measures or adjustments are in order.

You are the captain of your ship

It is advisable to perform a periodic assessment of the situation. At this

meeting with your advisory team, you make sure that new objectives are set, as well as a working strategy for the coming year. Whatever the input from your advisors, always remember that you are the captain of your ship. Just set up a team that works well to help you reach your goals, and make your experts work for you!

With his powerful follow-up tools, your Valacta advisor can, on a regular basis, provide you with sharp and clear information to help you follow your

* based on the 9 conditions for success defined by the *Table de concertation sur la reproduction*.

Outline for success with herd reproduction

- Action 1** Evaluate body condition score for the entire herd on a regular basis
- Action 2** Maintain accurate files
- Action 3** Establish a voluntary waiting period (VWP)
- Action 4** Breed the maximum of cows within the first cycle following the VWP
- Action 5** Maximize heat detection 21 days after breeding and perform early pregnancy diagnostics (between 30 to 40 days after breeding)
- Action 6** Daughters fertility – Put the emphasis on health traits in relation to your herd development objectives
- Action 7** Semen fertility – Determine the importance of this trait in your selection program

THIS SUMMER'S REMINDER
To maximize reproduction and production, evaluate body condition scores for the entire herd on a regular basis.