**„Rehab“ for the milk-cow?**

Thoughts on the dry standing time

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The time between the last milking and the birth of the next calf is usually called dry standing time in Austria, but the term "transit time" is also known, which means transitional time.

This phase, which lasts about eight weeks, is handled very differently on the farms. Some separate the cows from those to be milked, leave out the concentrated feed completely and give the cows their own basic feed, depending on the season, often stretched through the feed remainders of the dairy herd. Others block the cows extra, but continue the full feeding, especially with the TMR, and only reduce the concentrated feed ration administered via transponders. Still others do not even lock the cows away, a method that seems to be increasingly recommended for reasons of work rationalisation.

Unfortunately, the result is generally questionable. The accumulation of health problems in the first eight weeks after birth and the associated much too early elimination of many great breeding animals in the second or third lactation, should make everyone aware of how important and helpful optimal care of these high-performance animals in the eight weeks before calving is.

The most common problems around and just after birth, when we assume a normal physiological course of birth, are:

1. lying still due to calcium deficiency = hypocalcemia  
   2. being stuck due to liver failure  
   3. increased cell count > subclinical mastitis > acute mastitis   
   4. claw problems  
   5. Sterility

Ad 1: Calcium deficiency at birth, where the need for readily available calcium is highest, is mostly due to ancient causes. On the one hand, an oversupply of calcium during the dry period, caused by too calcium-rich basic feed, is a reason for the cow to mobilize insufficiently available calcium at the time of birth itself. In this case, the feed must be stretched with sufficient structure-relevant crude fibre, which also has a very positive effect on the chewing activity. It also prevents the animals from getting obese due to the high energy content of the basic feed. A surplus of calcium can be bound by adding clay minerals. On the other hand, it is increasingly difficult to produce basic feed with less than 2% potassium in the dry matter, especially for all manure spreading farms. In this case either certain mineral salts have to be added, which artificially regulate the acid content in the rumen, or the stretching of the basic feed with sufficiently short cut, high-quality feed straw is used.