

Ketone Testing in Dairy Cows



The period between calving and end of lactation is a critical time period that strongly correlates with the health and milk production of the cow. During this time, cows can slip into a ketotic state, putting them in risk of decreased milk yield, impaired reproductive performance, and higher risk of more severe clinical ketosis, all ultimately leading to economic loss.¹

Ketosis, arguably the most important metabolic disease in dairy herds in the US, occurs when there is a negative energy balance during lactation.^{2,3} This happens because the demand on the body during lactation exceeds the energy intake of the cow. The key to preventing ketosis before it becomes a clinical problem is checking cow β HBA levels through the lactation period and providing nutritional support for the herd.³

The gold standard for ketosis testing is blood Beta-Hydroxybutyrate or more simply, blood β HBA.^{1,2} Subclinical levels of ketosis occur between 1.2 – 1.4 mmol/L. This is an important threshold for dairy cows to detect advancing cases of ketosis and can be used to predict health risks during early lactation.^{2,3,4}

Did you know...

- Most clinical cases of ketosis occur in the 2-3 weeks after calving⁵
- Milk yields can decrease up to 4.6 lb. a day in the first week of lactation with subclinical ketosis⁵
- Cows with subclinical ketosis (1.2 – 1.4 mmol/L) were 3x more likely to be removed from the herd⁵
- The gold standard for testing ketones in dairy cows is blood β HBA^{1,2}

References:

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