

NMR is tackling the key issues facing producers this autumn on its stand at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show and at other events this autumn. Vets, nutritionists and consultants will be offering short individual consultations. Here's a taste of what's on offer.

Lack of energy in forages is the big issue this autumn, according to dairy consultant south west-based Pete Kelly, who will be on the NMR stand at Stoneleigh for the Dairy Event.

"There's been a lack of sun and this has had a detrimental effect on grass silage quality," says Mr Kelly. "And if the sun doesn't shine in the early part of September then maize silage will be just as bad," he says.

All this affects feed intake and, therefore, energy levels. "If the cow doesn't get enough energy then she will break down protein to make up the shortfall," adds Mr Kelly. "This is bad news as it affects production and fertility."

The advice to producers will be to keep ahead of the game and Pete Kelly will demonstrate how figures taken from Herd Companion's Feed Monitor will help. "Herd Companion will come into



Fat:protein graph – a talking point for producers with their vets and consultants, this graph gives vital pointers on rations and fertility

before it reaches the ideal 30% to 33% dry matter. I'm advising producers to wait until the maize has had a frost on it this year before cutting it so dry matters are boosted, but this does mean that cutting



James Bargh: "Mobility scores cows every five or six weeks"

It's time to talk – one-to-one – about mobility, fertility and winter nutrition

NMR showcase tackles hot topics

its own this season. "It highlights protein levels in milk for each cow and we need to review these relative to her stage in lactation. Drops in milk protein will indicate that she's breaking down protein to produce energy and that is both expensive and inefficient. If this is the case we can increase feed energy before production and fertility take a turn for the worst."

Consultant Barrie Audis, who will also be offering consultations on the NMR stand, describes an equally difficult forage year with protein also under pressure. "Maize silage isn't likely to meet the shortfall in quality either," he says.

"Producers will be tempted to cut maize

dates will run anything from four to eight weeks later than normal."

Fat:protein vital

Balancing the diet this year is paramount with high compound feed prices and more producers using blends. Mr Audis uses the Herd Companion fat:protein graph as his 'golden' reference point.

"We will have to watch the fat:protein ratios carefully as they will indicate energy supply – if ratios are high then freshly-calved cows can run into ketosis problems. Acidosis is a threat this year too and we can spot the risk of this if fat:protein ratios are too low."

Fertility monitoring will be the hot topic

for Gloucestershire-based Chris Watson, one of the team of vets on the NMR dairy Event stand. "We need to 'revise' the main drivers of good fertility then look at management improvements," says Mr Watson.

Serve on time

"Most important is getting cows served on time and then a close second is detecting returns to service to give cows as many opportunities as possible to be served. And thirdly, targeting – and hitting – reasonable conception rates."

Mr Watson will highlight the importance of keeping accurate records that highlight cows to serve. "We need to avoid having

a lot of cows with long 'involuntary' waiting periods such as those cows that are too fat, having been on lush grazing. And we need to deal with problem cows that are not getting in calf."

He also highlights the dangers of dry cows 'enjoying' a bit too much lush grazing, bringing problems such as bad calvings, milk fevers, uterine infection after calving (endometritis) and fat cows becoming sick with LDAs.

"We need to monitor cows carefully this autumn and detect fertility problems quickly. I will use InterHerd at the Dairy Event to show how it can work as an early-warning system and, with the vet and producer working together, we can

use it to monitor progress in health and fertility."

Mobility on the move

Launched earlier this year, NMR's mobility monitoring system is now in use on farm and early user, James Bargh from Bentham in Lancashire, describes it as very straightforward.

His 75-cow Holstein Friesian herd hasn't a lameness problem, but he has seen more 'rumblings' of lameness during the past 18 months. "Enough to make me want to keep on top of it," he says. An ImpelPro user, James is familiar with computers and he printed the template straight off the NMR Herd Companion website.

"It had all the cow numbers on it so I just wander around the herd – picking the right moment when the cows were relaxed and walking naturally. I scored them between zero and three. Most were zeros but there were some with a score of one and the odd cow with a two that had already been treated.

"It didn't take long to input the scores onto the computer. It will be interesting to see trends emerging and identify any persistent offenders. I plan to score them every five or six weeks. It's a good way of keeping right on top of foot health."

Karen Wright

Own data

Producers will be able to use their own data – from bulk milk tests or NMR records – in their individual consultations on the NMR stand at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show, 17/18 September, Stoneleigh. They can also see the Mobility Monitor in action.