

Timely re-introduction of cows into breeding after the previous calving has a fundamental influence on the calving interval and ultimately on the pregnancy rates and milk production in the herd. Traditionally a voluntary waiting period of 45-50 days is used in dairy cows beyond which they should be appointed to breeding at detected heat or included in synchronization of estrus.

Please answer the questions below to evaluate the way synchronization strategy is executed in your herd	Yes	No
Do you apply the same voluntary waiting period to all your cows?		
Do you base the voluntary waiting period for individual cows on their milk production?		
Do you base your voluntary waiting period for individual animals on their milk production persistency?		
Do you adjust the original voluntary waiting period in cows with poor body condition?		
Do you have cows that are allocated a voluntary waiting period of above 60 days post-calving?		
Have you completed an economical evaluation of your current breeding strategy ?		

The basic recommendations

In general, a minimal VWP of 45 to 60 d pp is recommended, allowing for complete uterine involution and resumption of normal ovarian cyclicity to improve the rate of successful conception after AI.

Extending the Voluntary Waiting Period

A small extension of the VWP may be advantageous in a cow showing a high milk persistency in combination with a high milk production level (Allore and Erb, 2000; Arbel et al., 2001). Although extending the VWP may result in increased first service pregnancy per AI, it does not necessarily result in reduced days open.

Individual animal-based decision

Because individual cows differ largely in milk production (both in level and shape of the lactation curve), the economically optimal VWP may differ between cows.

Selective Longer VWP can be considered in case of:

- Cows calving in poor body conditions and/or recuperating the body condition slowly
- Cows calving in winter with low milk production
- Cows with a particularly high milk persistency