

## Preface

# Managing the Transition Cow to Optimize Health and Productivity



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*Guest Editors*

The transition period from 3 weeks before parturition extending to 3 weeks postpartum represents a crucial stage in the life cycle of the dairy cow. No other 6-week period can affect subsequent production, health, and fertility so greatly, and it is not surprising that the transition period is the focus of much research and clinical interest.

From the outset, our aim as Guest Editors of this issue of the *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Food Animal Practice* was to recruit a group of authors who would be widely recognized as authorities in their disciplines, and who could deliver articles with both a firm research basis and a practical clinical focus. We wanted this issue to be a useful resource for anyone interested in the transition period of the dairy cow, whether they work in a classroom, practice vehicle, or dairy barn. We believe that goal has been achieved, and hope that the readers agree.

Ideas of transition cow management are in flux at the present time. The traditional view of a 60-day dry period, with two different dietary groups and dry-cow antibiotic therapy for all of the cows in a herd, may well be a thing of the past. For example, the final article opens a window to the future and explores the possibilities for shortening or eliminating the dry period, while the preceding article examines special techniques used in the transition period to manipulate subsequent production. Our article on housing integrates issues of cow behavior and social rank into a clinical perspective on health risks related to pen moves and stocking density. In essence, the future appears to offer a wide range of options for transition

period management, which may well be tailor-made to fit the needs of the individual cow. We firmly believe that an individual cow's requirements should not be forgotten—even in herds with thousands of cows calving each year. The dairies, large or small, that can accommodate this wide range of needs will be the most successful in the long term.

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