

## **Tail Scoring Protocol – Dairy Holdings Limited 2017**

Dairy Holdings Limited (DHL) have instigated a programme of Tail Scoring on all milking cows and in calf R2 heifers.

The information DHL require is;

- Is the tail normal or abnormal
- If abnormal - where the abnormality/ies are located
- If a tail has multiple abnormalities
- If a tail has a "Double Break" (two fractures about 10cm apart) or has a compound fracture (bone exiting skin).
- Whether a tail is docked too short.

Animals with abnormal tails (that does not include tails that are docked short with no other abnormalities) on the day of tail scoring will have a red button tag inserted by farm staff under supervision of the vet. The tags will be sent to the vet clinics prior to assessment and be taken to the farm by the vets.

DHL require that the data is sent straight through to Richard Harrison at the office in Timaru to [richard@dairyholdings.co.nz](mailto:richard@dairyholdings.co.nz). The data is not to be analysed or a report written. This will be done by DHL after comparing the new data with the historical data for each herd.

All farms were assessed in 2016 to establish each individual animal's tail health status and now a reassessment programme has been put in place. Farms for reassessment will be selected by DHL along with timing though most of this will occur between 1<sup>st</sup> June and the start of calving. DHL will continue to have R2yr heifer tails assessed at the scheduled pregnancy scan.

All tail assessment charges and fees, including for variable order sharemilker farms with stock owned by the sharemilker, will be charged to DHL.

Vetlife is to cover the farms in North Otago and Canterbury, VetSouth the farms in Southland/West Otago and Buller Vets the Springs Junction farms.

### **Scoring Timing**

- R2yr heifers are to be assessed at pregnancy scanning on the grazing blocks.
- All stock purchased and introduced into DHL farm herds by either DHL or the Farm Operator will be assessed at the start of the season.

- All dairy herds will be re-assessed when there is a change of Farm Operator. These assessments will be done in July/early August either at the wintering block or at the dairy farm on return from winter grazing. On farms with herring bone sheds the assessment may need to take place between milkings. All cows on farm at the time are to be assessed and recorded.
- The DHL Farm Supervisor will coordinate the assessment and will ensure that all cows are presented for assessment.

### **Assessment Technique**

- The trained operator is to use two hands to feel for abnormalities, starting with the tailbase and moving down the entire tail.
- A separate person will record the data.
- A normal tail is one with no lesions, injuries, lumps or bumps.

### **Abnormalities to be looked for are**

- Tails are to be assessed for any of the following abnormalities;
  - breaks,
  - angulations of the tail,
  - subluxations,
  - abscesses,
  - faecal damage
- There is no need to differentiate between long standing (chronic) or very recent (acute) because of the programme of regular re-assessments.
- **DHL policy is no shortening of the tail at all.**

### **Scoring Technique**

- Tails with no abnormality are to be scored as normal.
- If the tail base is deviated within reason (30 degrees), is stable, flexes normally, and is not painful it is to be recorded as normal.
- Injection site lesions at the para-caudal fossa aren't to be recorded as tail abnormalities.
- If a tail is docked shorter than half way up the udder it is to be recorded as too short.
- If there is a compound fracture (breaks about 10 cm apart) the type of break must be recorded as a "double" break.
- If there is only ONE of any other kind of abnormality on the tail only record the location of the abnormality. The options are Tailbase, Top Half, Bottom Half and Switch.
- If multiple abnormalities (not including docked tails) are present, the cow is to be recorded as having multiple abnormalities on the recording device. The cow number and the locations of the abnormalities are to be recorded on paper. Also, record the "double" breaks and compound fractures.

### Moderation

Consistency of assessment is vital to this program. Therefore all vets doing the tail scoring must undertake a joint moderation activity to ensure that tail abnormalities are assessed and scored the same way.

The process of the moderation will involve all Vets who are involved in the Tail Scoring process to have undergone a training session with a senior Vetlife Vet prior to doing any tail scoring jobs. Depending on the number of personnel involved, this will involve travel by either a Vetlife vet or vets of another practice. DHL have agreed for reasonable reimbursement for Vetlife to ensure the moderation is carried out suitably.

### Recording Technique

The farm will provide a staff member to help read the tags. Animals with no identification must be re-tagged and/or their EID tag read.

Recording will be done on the DairyNZ BCS Tracker recording app on smart phones. This can be found on Android's Play Store or Apple's equivalent.

Steps to take are:

1. Create Herd. Label Herd so it is clear what farm is being done. For example, 'Tails "farm name" Dec 16'. And SAVE
2. Push tab to "on" for Record Tags.
3. Enter Cow tag number, then "next".
4. If a tail has been docked too short record it by pushing "flag cow", then in "reason for flag", select "sort" as the identifier.
5. Otherwise/or then, select the score from the key pad table that is correct for that cow.
  - 5.5 - Normal tail (No abnormalities-could be docked)
  - 3 - Tailbase
  - 4 - Top Half
  - 5 - Bottom Half
  - 6 - Switch
  - 6.5 - Multiple lesions
6. Push "save score" when finished with that cow.

7. Repeat steps 3 to 6 for the next cow
8. To finish job push "finished" in bottom right corner.
9. On Reports page push "Data View" and select "Cow Scores".
10. Push "Send", and then select email to forward the data to [Richard@dairyholdings.co.nz](mailto:Richard@dairyholdings.co.nz)
11. Cows that had multiple abnormalities, double breaks and compound fractures are to be recorded on paper with the locations of the abnormalities, transferred to excel and sent through to Richard on the day of the job.
12. Put phone onto flight mode to avoid interruptions.

Please note that a cow with a tail that is docked too short is to have this recorded as well as having a number recorded for its tail status.

### **Requirements for DHL**

- Supervisors to inform the Farm Operator at each farm when they are scheduled for a tail assessment visit.
- Supervisors to inform the Farm Operator at each farm that they are required to provide staff members to load stock, help read tags, and to insert red button tags for each job.
- Supervisors to check that each farm's tag situation is under control with minimal missing tags present and that replacement tags or an EID wand is available if required.
- Supervisors to ensure that all targeted stock are presented for assessment.

### **Requirements for Vets**

- To supply DHL with a schedule, which DHL supervisors will use to communicate to the Farm Operator. Times will need to be confirmed by vets.
- To record appropriate data for each farm, and return to DHL Head Office on the day it is assessed.
- To provide a vet and a person to record the data.
- Maintain confidentiality.