



Managing Cows To Avoid Abomasal Displacement

The abomasum is the fourth or true stomach of the cow. It is normally located in the lower right front quadrant of the abdomen. Occasionally it may become dilated with gas and/or fluid and is displaced to an abnormal position to the left or right of the rumen. Most displacements (80-90%) are to the left (LDA) with fewer but more severe ones to the right (RDA).

Most authors have noted that displaced abomasums (DAs) occur most frequently in heavy-producing cows being fed high-grain rations, with 80-90% occurring within 30 days postpartum and 60-80% occurring within two weeks postpartum. Even though most DAs occur within the first 30 days of lactation, they may occur at any time. They have been documented in late lactation, prior to freshening, heifers, and bulls. The rate of occurrence is as varied as herds and management. Percentages of DAs can be as little as 1%, to greater than 25% of the herd. An acceptable level is less than 3%.

DAs are very costly, estimated to be \$200-\$500 per case. With 80-90% occurring in the first 30 days postpartum, they can be devastating to the cow's production and profitability that lactation.

There are a number of factors that predispose a cow to a DA that must be considered in the prevention of them. Here are a few:

1. Fat cows
2. Ketosis/fatty liver
3. Metritis
4. Retained placenta
5. Mastitis
6. Milk fever
7. Excessive grain feeding
8. Dry matter depression in the transition period
9. Limited feed and water
10. Environment/stress

We could go on with this list and add to it, but as you can see most of the factors on the list are related in some way to nutritional management – in many cases to the transitional period of the cow. Several investigators have shown high levels of concentrate in the diet decrease abomasal contractions by increasing the amount of volatile fatty acids entering the abomasum. High concentrate rations fed in the transition period could possibly lower abomasal contractions and increase abomasal gas production, increasing the chance of a DA in cows close to freshening.

Development of good feeding programs that provide adequate roughage fiber to heavy springers and fresh cows will lower the incidence of DAs. Cows in good body condition should be in a similar condition at freshening and not allowed to fatten during the dry period.

At Vigortone we have two products that help reduce the stress on the cow during the transition period. One is our **Prime'er™** product which helps the cow detoxify the liver, lowering problems with the fatty liver and increasing the available energy to help lower the metabolic diseases associated with it. The other is **Lacto Edge®**, a direct-fed microbial product with live yeast that stimulates the rumen so it is more efficient and stimulates the immune system. Both help reduce stress on the cow during the transition period and early lactation, thereby lowering the incidence of DAs.