



## Fiji DAIRYNOTE 4.1 – Breeding and Reproduction: Heat Detection

### Good Practice Guide for Fiji Dairy Farmers

#### What is heat detection?

- A cow is 'on heat' when she stands to be ridden by her herd mates or a bull in order to become inseminated. Cows are on heat every 18-24 days, averaging 21 days in non-pregnant cows. Their on-heat activity lasts on average 14-15 hours; however, this time can vary from 2-30 hours.
- Accurate heat detection is required for artificial breeding, i.e. where cows are inseminated by a technician using semen collected from bulls (fresh or frozen). It is important that you record when your animals are due to be on heat, because if you miss it, you will lose 21 days of production (due to late calving).
- Heat detection is easiest about two hours after milking. For this reason, observe your animals on the race before milking and in the paddock. If you see an animal on heat, record its animal number and the date on a document (always ensure that animal tags are clean so that numbers are recorded correctly).

#### Cows coming into heat (duration 6-10 hours)

- Will not stand to be ridden; however they will attempt to ride other cows.
- Will smell other cows.
- Display a moist, red, and slightly swollen vulva.
- Are restless and will emit deep, loud sounds.



#### Cows in heat (duration 2-30 hours, average 15 hours)

- Stand to be ridden, with hair and skin rubbed off the crest of their tail.
- Are nervous, excitable, restless and may try to ride other cows.
- May stand with their back arched and tail in the air.
- Spend less time than usual grazing.
- Display a moist, red vulva, with clear mucus discharge.
- May hold milk.
- Frequently lead the herd from the paddock or lag behind.



**Note: While cows will not stand to be ridden after heat, they will smell other cows and may have a clear mucus discharge from the vulva.**



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### Heat detection aids

Heat detection aids help you determine if your animal is on heat or not.

#### Tail paint

- Paint your animal's tail when it is on heat.
- Tail paint should be no more than 20cm long, 5cm wide and over the rear segment of the backbone.
- It should be sufficiently thick to cover the skin with some hair fibres still visible.
- Make sure you use commercial tail paint or sprays, not house paint.



#### Kamars

- Kamars are stuck onto the tail end of a cow as shown in the pictures below.
- They change colour when they are 'activated' by another cow riding the cow in heat.

