



BUILDING A HIGH FERTILITY DAIRY HERD

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MY FARMING JOURNEY (SO FAR!)

- Where I came from
- How I got here
- Where I am now
- What I have learned along the way



MY BACKGROUND

- 1989 Clonakilty Ag College
- 1990 - 2000 Building Trade/Farming
- 2000 Full time Farming
- 2003 Took over farm
 - 90 acres
 - 60 cows
 - Beef and Barley

THE HERD I INHERITED

- British Fr herd
- 78% calving in 6 weeks
- 14 week calving
- 7% not in calf (after 14 weeks breeding)
- 30% of replacements from AI
- 35% of cows assisted at calving

Fertility performance

	2005	2007	2010	2012	2015
No. cows	56	150	200	215	300
6 week calving rate (%)	63	68	59	87	90
Empty rate (%)	7	10	9	7	5
Length of breeding season (weeks)	13	18	22	12	11
Submission rate	80	68	75	90	95

PARTNERS SINCE 2007

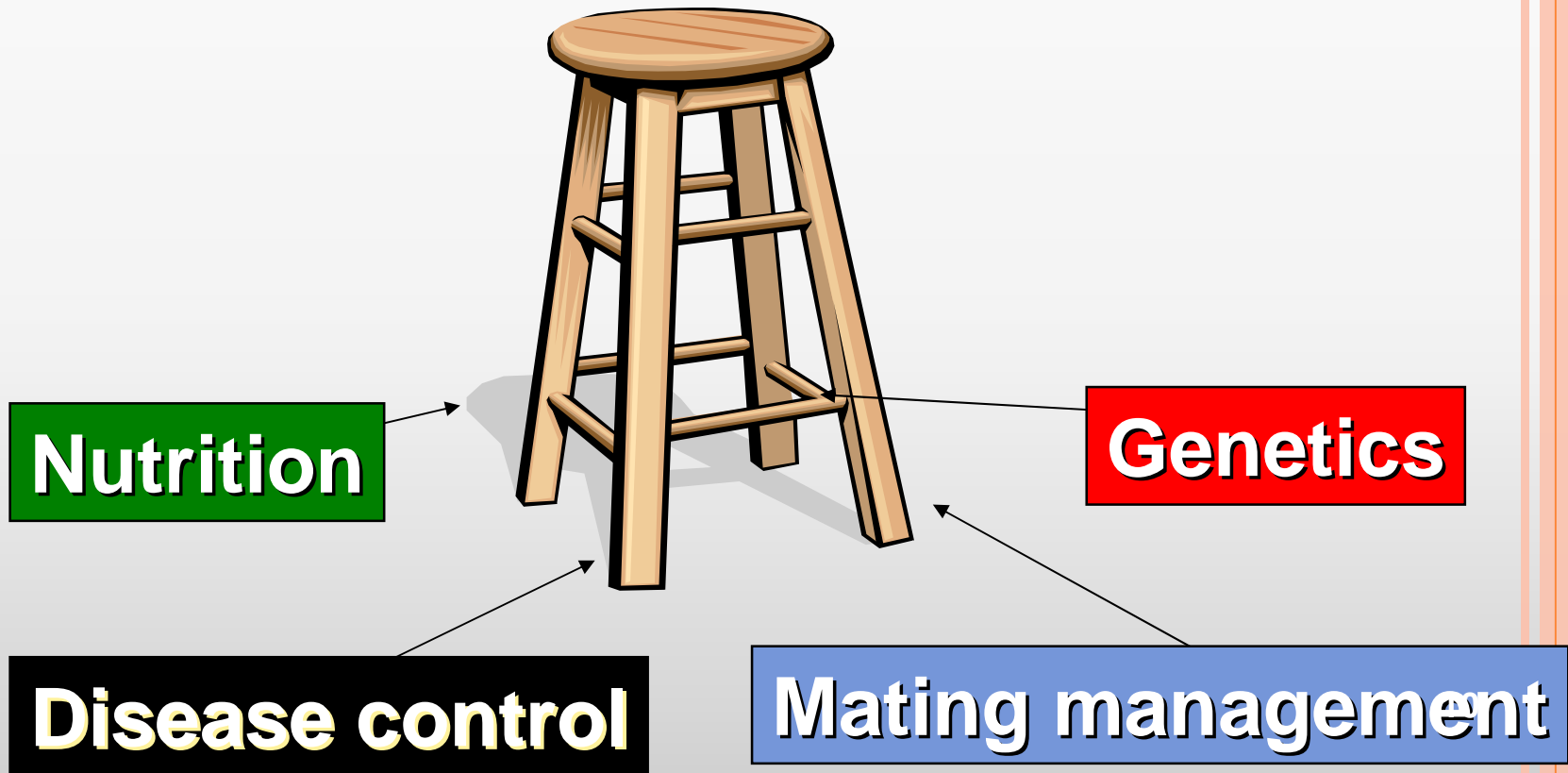


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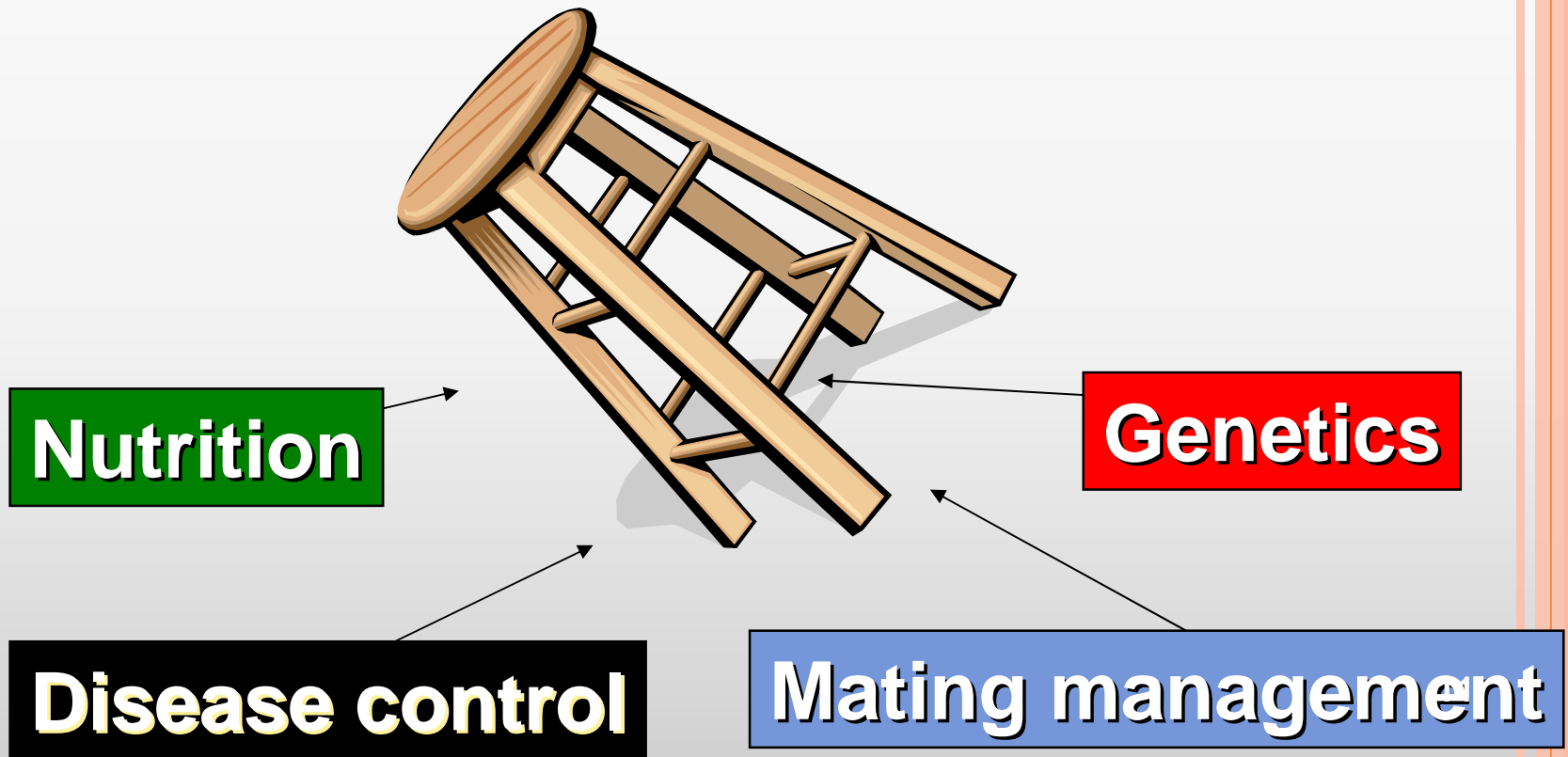
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EBI	9	48	82	123	150



The Fertility Stool



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What were the problems??

Disease control

- Mixing herds of cows
 - Vaccination
 - Breed your own
- Old cows
 - 4th + lactation to hell or AIBP
- Mastitis
 - Professional help
 - Control plan
- Lameness
 - Record treatments and cull



Genetics

- Cow type
 - Originally British Friesian
 - Bought in Holsteins
 - Bred New Zealand Friesian
 - Now cross breeding
 - Easily managed cow
 - More profitable
 - Small robust cow
- Long breeding season
 - 13 → 22 → 12 weeks
- EBI
 - Herd average - €123 (fert €79)
 - Fertility sub-index
- 100% AI bred heifers



BFR – EBI €237 (fertility €246)



X bred – EBI €141 (fertility €83)

Mating management

- Tail painting
 - Pre-breeding
 - Top up
 - Colours
- Observation
 - 2 – 4 times/day - cows
 - 4 - 5 times/day – heifers
 - Synchronisation - PG
 - Handling cows after 7 days
- Calving finished by start of breeding
 - Sell empties and late calvers
- Excellent AI technician

Nutrition

- High quality grass
 - 1000 – 1500 kg DM/ha
 - All stock
- Weanlings outwintered
 - Set up for breeding
- Light weanlings fed in first autumn
- Dry cow minerals
- Iodine to heifers on kale

FERTILITY – WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

- Breed for fertility
- Cross breed to gain hybrid vigour advantage
- Rear and feed the calves and heifers
 - Batched and fed according to weight
 - Out wintered 1st winter
- Quality grass to ALL stock
- Heat detection a priority

CONCLUSION



- When systems are changing, bring the four legs of the stool with you:
- Nutrition: all animals optimally fed
- Genetics: breed on EBI for the most fertile cows
- Disease control: vaccines, vitamins, minerals at optimum levels when mixing herds
- Mating management: devise a plan, and stick to it.
- Keep good records – and use them!