HOW TO USE TAIL PAINT FOR HEAT DETECTION
The timing of your tail chalking routine is a critical step in your identification protocol. According to University studies, cows show signs of estrus at the least convenient time of the day for heat detection. 70% of estrus activity takes place between 6 PM and 6 AM, thus making visual observations alone very inaccurate in heat detection. This is the main reason why tail painting can be an effective tool in catching these standing heats that would otherwise be missed.

It is important to properly detect cows in heat because of the potential financial loss that can occur for missed cows in heat. There is a $2-3 loss per day for each cow that remains open over 115 days. That is a significant loss that comes right off the bottom line.

One of the most reliable indicators of a cow going into estrus is observing it in a standing heat. When a cow will stand still and allow another cow to mount it, it is in a state called standing heat. Studies have shown that with the correct use of tail paints, also called tail chalk, almost 90% of cows can be identified when they are in a standing heat. Tail painting can pick up cows which are standing for only a short time that would otherwise be missed by observation alone.

Reading the tail paint requires close observation and some practice. When a cow is just coming into heat and is being ridden but will not stand, the chalk will be slightly smeared. Also, it will have some of the riding cows hair in it and the hair and chalk will be ruffled forward with a feather appearance. When those conditions are spotted, write down the cows number and watch it more closely. When she is in standing heat and being ridden repeatedly, the paint will be mostly rubbed off.

The All-Weather® Paintstik® has proven to be the most effective and cost efficient tail paint available for proper heat detection. It is important to properly detect cows in heat because of the potential financial loss that can occur for missed cows in heat. There is a $2-3 loss per day for each cow that remains open over 115 days. That is a significant loss that comes right off the bottom line.

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The timing of your tail chalking routine is a critical step in your identification protocol. According to University studies, cows show signs of estrus at the least convenient time of the day for heat detection. 70% of estrus activity takes place between 6 PM and 6 AM, thus making visual observations alone very inaccurate in heat detection. This is the main reason why tail painting can be an effective tool in catching these standing heats that would otherwise be missed.

The idea behind tail chalking is that the specially formulated paint will be rubbed off by the brisket of the riding cow, so it’s easier to spot a cow in standing heat. For over 40 years the All-Weather® Paintstik® has proven to be the most effective and cost efficient tail paint available for proper heat detection.

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Applying the Tail Paint:
Using the All-Weather® Paintstik®, remove the skin that will form on the end of the stick. Mark the cow by making a line from the tail head. The line should be approximately 2 inches wide and 6 inches long. The length of the mark is important because of the different contact points possible when a cow is mounted.

The All-Weather® Paintstik® comes in a wide variety of colors and is easy to apply. Be careful not to apply too thick a coat of paint, as this will make it more difficult to interpret the marks, especially on low activity cows. The easily visible tail paint should remain on the cow for up to 4 weeks unless the cow is shedding its coat.

Correct use of tail painting identifies almost 90% of cows in standing heat.
Tail painting picks up cows which are only standing for a short time that would otherwise be missed.
Apply paint to cover those points near the head of the tail which will be rubbed off by the brisket of the riding cow.
Check the paint mark at each milking or during the lock-up if head locks are available.
Cows detected on heat and then inseminated should not be repainted until the following milking. Use a different color when re-painting inseminated cows. Unmated cows are then easier to identify.
You may want to use one color for cows prior to voluntary waiting period, one color for cows after the voluntary period and before first service, and one color for cows that have been inseminated.

Maintaining a healthy reproductive program is critical to the success of your dairy. With the aid of this proven heat detection technique, the opportunity to improve your herds pregnancy rates and profits is greatly increased.
For over 40 years LACO’s All-Weather® markers have been America’s first choice for livestock marking. Log on to Laco.com to learn more about our full line of non-toxic, “Made in America” quality animal marking products.