



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM FEBRUARY 2011



Above Hilton Williams with his youngest daughter Skylia, age 2

Rugby Volunteer of the Year

Hilton Williams of Horowhenua Kapiti was named the volunteer of the year for his services to community rugby. Hilton is the secretary of the Shannon Rugby Club and a former senior player. Hilton was awarded the Charles Munro Rugby Volunteer of the Year at the New Zealand Steinlager Rugby Awards in Auckland on December 17th, 2010.

Totally Vets congratulates Hilton on the sterling work he puts into his local Shannon Rugby Club and Horowhenua Kapiti rugby in general. Hilton, along with his brother Michael and long-standing rugby stalwart father John, are the archetypal grassroots supporters of heartland rugby in New Zealand.

Lift income and reduce expenses

Paul Wiseman

It's no surprise that cows with lower somatic cell counts (SCC) produce more milk.

A rule of thumb is that for every 100,000 cells drop down toward 150,000, you gain a litre of daily production. Or by dropping bulk milk SCC (BMSCC) from 350,000 to 150,000, a 300-cow herd can earn approximately \$250 more each day.

The national average BMSCC continues to trend upwards, costing both suppliers and dairy companies time and money. Somatic cells are the udders' response to infection with bacteria and are a direct measure of the level of mastitis in a cow or herd. The lower the BMSCC, the healthier your cows, and the better the quality of milk produced.

Fonterra is launching an initiative to reduce mastitis in high SCC herds. This follows the tremendous success of their hygiene-grading service model implemented in October 2009. The key to this improvement, according to Andy Goodwin, Fonterra Milk Quality Manager, was early intervention, consistency of delivery and consistency of key messages.

The initiative will bring together veterinarians, Fonterra milk-quality staff, dairy assessors and milking machine technicians to help farmers with high cell-count herds.

THE FOUR STAGES IN THE PROCESS START WITH:

Trigger point 1: Fonterra contacts farmers who have breached the BMSCC threshold and discusses measures the farmer is taking to reduce their BMSCC. If Fonterra thinks it is necessary, they initiate the next step.

Trigger point 2: dairy assessors visit the farm to identify any obvious risk areas. If the BMSCC does not drop below 400,000, Fonterra may trigger the next stage.

Trigger point 3: an accredited veterinarian is required to complete a mastitis management visit to identify the causes of mastitis and make appropriate recommendations. If the herd continues to grade then the next stage is initiated.

Trigger point 4: Pure Milk Mastitis Consultancy liaises with the farmer's vet and does another review at a milking visit to identify areas that may be of concern.

For consistency of approach to the investigation and to ensure the advice given follows industry recommendations, accredited veterinarians will be required to undergo training. Vets who have already completed the New Zealand advanced mastitis training course or "Countdown Downunder" training are required to complete a one-day refresher course.





Totally Vets current stock health

Issues that may be confronting all farmers are stock access to suitable water, parasites and Facial Eczema (FE). The first you can do something about and Totally Vets can help you with the second two. Not knowing the drench resistance status of your animals is akin to putting petrol in a diesel. Arrange for a faecal egg count reduction test on young stock and find out which drenches won't work for you.

Know your FE status and arrange for spore counting if you're on susceptible properties.

Dairy

For those of you who wait until now before implementing stage one of your Lepto protection plan, young stock vaccination needs to start soon for full protection of both animals and people.



HA HA

The improved National Health Insurance

The South African Medical doctors have weighed in on the new health care proposals.

The Gastroenterologists had a sort of a gut feeling about it, but the neurologists thought the government had a lot of nerve.

The Obstetricians felt they were all labouring under a misconception.

Ophthalmologists considered the idea short-sighted.

Pathologists yelled, "Over my dead body!" while the Paediatricians said, "Oh, grow up!"

The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness, while the Radiologists could see right through it.

Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing. The ENT specialists wouldn't hear of it.

The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists were pissed off at the whole idea.

The Anaesthetists thought the whole idea was a gas, and the Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.

In the end, the Proctologists won out, leaving the entire decision up to the assholes in Pretoria!!

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Manawatu Monitor Farm update

Greta Baynes

The B+LNZ Manawatu Monitor Farms were busy in November with a Wishnowsky farm tour and a discussion about managing farm costs.

The cow mating date is being moved and the weaner policy changed. The new crops are in and hopefully by the time this goes to print, looking a picture.

EWES DOCKING PERFORMANCE:

Mob	Terminal	Maternal
To ram	1020	550
PSL	25/8	7/10
Scan	148%	150%
Dock %	109%	131%
Lb surv	74%	92%
Ewe surv	93%	300

RANDOM FACTS AND HINTS:

- NZ lamb crop is down 2.8 MILLION lambs (31% down in Manawatu)
- Knowing which drenches work on your property could save you thousands of dollars
- Set animal health plans to identify targets, actions and products
- Benchmark your farm to identify opportunities
- Examine different interest costs e.g. floating vs fixed vs a mix
- EID is an opportunity
- Aim for optimum P, K, S and lime levels to optimise clover growth
- Use least-cost fertiliser

Lift income and reduce expenses

Continued from page 1

Paul Wiseman

Anita Renes and Craig Dickson have completed all requirements and are accredited veterinary providers to the Fonterra initiative. Greg Smith and Craig Tanner have both

completed the advanced mastitis training course.

Some of your investment in milk quality may be recoverable as demerit relief.

Why wait to take advantage of more production, reduced animal health costs and a less stressful milking environment? If your BMSCC is greater than 300,000 you are not only losing money, you're also at risk of grading. Totally Vets' skilled milking management veterinarians are willing to walk you through the process of achieving quality milk supply.



Plan pregnancy-testing dates to provide you with the information you require. If left too late, yes or no may be the only possible answers.

Identify those persistently high somatic cell count cows for early dry-off and treatment if your bulk tank SCC is above 300,000. It will rise as the cows drop off in production.

Monitor young stock growth rates. If they're not achieving ask yourself, or Totally Vets, why? Keep an eye for sudden deaths. It may be Polioencephalomalacia.

Sheep

Sudden, unexplained deaths now can be caused by a lot of different things. Different diseases require different strokes to remedy or prevent. Post mortems do provide an awful lot of information if they're done before the carcass melts into the ground.

Check those rams for *Brucella ovis*. Don't leave it till the last minute and then scramble if the results are not what you want.

Prepare your teasers.

Order your repro' vaccines: Campylovexin/Campyvax, Toxovax, Androvax or Ovastim.

Beware the evil fly.

Deer

Remove re-growth.

Consider vaccinating weaners for leptospirosis.

Blood-sucking worm

Greta Baynes

Barber's pole is a worm named for its red and white striped appearance. The red is the blood it has sucked from your animals. Significant burdens can cause significant reductions in productivity. Know your enemy.

Barber's Pole (*Haemonchus contortus*) sucks blood from the abomasum (the fourth stomach), causing anaemia and death in animals. It's usually lambs that suffer but severe burdens can also affect ewes. Outbreaks are seen in summer and autumn with rain or heavy dews during or after a hot dry spell.

It is not unusual for burdens to be high enough to cause anaemia in animals. The range of signs seen in affected animals varies:

- Ill-thrift (may be seen as a large tail-end)
- Pale gums
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Animals lagging at the end of the mob
- Collapsed or dead animals

It is not typical for barber's pole to cause a scour as it sucks blood, so works in a different way to other parasites.

Now is a critical time to be monitoring for barber's pole. It is also essential that you know how you are going to treat if this disease occurs. Many drenches have a claim to kill *Haemonchus* but will only eliminate the current infection. These worms are continually picked up from the environment, so it is recommended to treat with a product that has extended protection against *Haemonchus*.

Historically, diagnosis has been made by faecal egg counts and larval culture or at post mortem where the large worms can be seen in the abomasum. These methods can still be used but we have a new and exciting test available, the *Haemonchus* dipstick test.

The dipstick test involves a process of diluting the faeces and heating for a time then measuring the amount of blood in the sample. The blood is released from the lining of the stomach when the worm has had its fill. Obviously, the blood level in the faeces will be higher if the parasite burden is more severe. From this test we can estimate the burden in the animals and make recommendations on further monitoring or treatment.

To monitor we suggest bringing in some fresh faecal samples from your lambs (they can

be refrigerated if you cannot bring them in directly). Hold the lambs in the corner of a paddock for five to ten minutes, and then collect ten fresh samples. It is important that they are not collected from the rectum as this method may damage the rectum and cause blood in the faeces. These samples should be kept separate (use an egg carton, or sample packs are available from the clinic).

We can perform a faecal egg count on each sample to determine if other parasites are affecting your animals and if you wish, can go ahead and do the dipstick test to work out if barber's pole is an issue you need to address. When dropping off the sample, it is helpful to know the age of the animals, the date of the last drench and what was used. You will be called with the results and recommendations for further monitoring or treatment.

Treatment and prevention is based on strategic drenching at this time of year. The drug of choice is moxidectin (Vetdectin or Cydectin - 10 day meat withholding period) or abamectin + closantel (Genesis Ultra - 56 day meat withholding period). This should be followed up in 4 to 5 weeks by a second drench in the case of an outbreak.

Know your enemy - monitor and treat accordingly so you do not suffer poor growth rates or lose lambs to this vampire-like parasite.





How much feed is in your crop?

Lindsay Rowe

Turnip crops can provide an excellent highly digestible source of both energy and protein for dairy cows through the summer feeding period - the bulb will contain high concentrations of sugar leading to ME values of around 13MJ per kg DM while the leaf will have a crude protein level of close to 20%. This can be a very valuable addition to the diet at a time when both the energy (and digestibility) as well as the protein content of the pasture are under pressure.

The downside of this highly digestible crop is that it contains very limited levels of effective fibre, the sort that makes cows chew their cud. As a consequence, the crop needs to be

introduced slowly into the diet over 4-5 days, the quantity fed needs to be kept below 30% of the total intake (which requires that we know the feeding rate!) and some additional effective fibre e.g. hay, straw, poor-quality baylage, should be added if possible.

To be able to accurately manage the feeding of this crop and gain maximum benefit from it requires that the yield be carefully measured; this will then allow the daily break size and therefore the DM intake per cow to be calculated.

1. Take a 4 metre length of wire and bend it into a square to give one square metre. Alternatively, joining a 3.54m length of pipe into a circle will also give a "square" metre.
2. Place it in a representative part of the crop and pick all the turnip plants in the enclosed area.
3. Place the plants in a bag and weigh in kgs. Ideally, repeat this several times in various parts of the paddock and calculate an average weight.
4. Divide the (average) weight from one square metre by 10 to get the kgs DM per square metre.

5. Multiply kgs DM per square metre by 10,000 to get the yield of DM in tonnes per hectare.

6. Hopefully the crop will still be growing in excess of 100kg DM per ha per day so it will weigh about 2.0 tonne heavier in a further 3 weeks' time!

Note:

- The target feeding rate should be approximately 4kg DM turnips per cow per day.
- For a crop yielding 10.0 tonne/ha, each cow needs to be offered four square metres per day i.e. 400 sq. metres per 100 cows per day, to achieve the targeted turnip intake.
- Plan for as long a face on the break as possible as this will give better utilisation.
- Make sure the crop is fed fast enough to ensure that it is finished before the crop quality deteriorates so that the re-grassing programme is not compromised.

If you would like to discuss measuring your crop and calculating the appropriate feeding rate, don't hesitate to give us a call at **Totally Vets.**

What's the goss?

Congratulations to **Bruce** and **Jane Coombes'** daughter **Surrey**, who made the **NZ U17 Koru basketball team**. Surrey travelled to Albury, NSW in January to compete against State teams in the Australian Country Junior Basketball Cup over 12 days. Well done Surrey!



The Totally Vets' float in the Feilding Christmas Parade involved a large number



of staff and their pets this year - in fact, eight dogs, one cat, one sheep, one goat and

Recollections of Vietnam

Greg Smith

In February 2010, Totally Vets was contracted to provide veterinary services to a greenfields dairy project in Vietnam. A Vietnamese company is commissioning the project and an Israeli company is providing the expertise for the design, construction and management of the farming enterprise. Located around 300km south of Hanoi, the farm is set in rolling hill country in the rural province of Nghe An.

The immediate goal was to establish three farms at the initial site, each farm to house and milk 2400 cows plus replacements. PGG Wrightson supplied the livestock including some from the Manawatu. Two shipments of 1600 rising 2-year old Friesian heifers arrived within seven weeks of each other in February and April. These animals had been synchronised in batches followed by fixed time AI prior to leaving NZ. (Pregnancy rate 55% - not bad for one chance only!). Another two shipments in June and September were of around 1500 ten month-old Friesian heifers.

Each shipment was quarantined for six weeks after arrival in a facility close to the farms. During the first week of quarantine, the government agency overseeing the quarantine period tests and vaccinates all heifers against a range of diseases that will make you pleased to farm in NZ. They include TB, Foot and Mouth Disease, Haemorrhagic Septicaemia and tick-borne fevers which have the greatest potential to cause serious disease in naive cattle entering a tropical environment. Other diseases of concern are Anthrax, Botulism, *Brucella abortus* and Rabies. Many countries accept these diseases as standard.

The Totally Vets veterinarian's job is to supervise and train local vets in the daily inspection and treatment of animals in both quarantine and on the farms; manage and implement vaccination and other preventative measures (e. g. tick control) and routine examination of all cows on at least three occasions during lactation to condition-score; detect metabolic disorders (e. g. ketosis) and displaced abomasums, reproductive disorders; and confirm pregnancy in late lactation. These occur:

1. 5-12 days post-calving
2. At peak lactation around 40 days
3. 240 days into lactation

Each cow is also pregnancy-tested 40-45 days post-insemination and if pregnant, will not be seen again until late lactation.

If empty, they're treated as a non-cycler and automatically drafted if they are not mated within 14 days of the last intervention. There are also default examination dates post-calving of 50 days for cows and 70 days for 1st calvers if not submitted for AI before then. So in keeping with an intensive operation, the process is very structured to stop animals falling through the cracks.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect is the buildings. Cows are housed in open-sided sheds. The area of each shed is 60 metres wide by 160 long, about one hectare, which is impressive up close. Each shed has a central feed-out lane lined by individual head bails for cows to access the feed. These bails can be locked in groups of 60 for pregnancy-testing etc... Cows have a communal loafing area adjacent to the outside railings and this area occupies most of the shed's space. Between the loafing area and the bails is a concrete laneway where the cows stand when feeding and access the water troughs. The laneway is scraped at least once daily but the loafing area is maintained as a deep litter system to compost the manure and urine. To cope with the heat when the wind speed was low, fans of two metres in diameter are suspended from the ceiling and angled downwards every 20 or so metres. Sprinklers will be installed over the concreted area to improve heat loss but can only be used when either fans or wind are moving air. A feed centre, under construction, and a machinery workshop capable of servicing eight farms are also part of the infrastructure.



two magnificent Clydesdales, Rochelle and Charlotte. The team was delighted to receive the "Best Christmas Theme" award. The star of the show was undoubtedly **Anita's** pet sheet Loulou who cruised around Feilding like she attended parades every day. Many thanks to **Brian Hunter** and the Coach House Museum for providing us with the wonderful coach.

At our Palmerston North branch, there is much excitement as **Julie** and her fiancé **Nick** have announced they are expecting a baby in

early July. **Paul** had hip surgery in January and **Margaret** is having shoulder surgery this month - we wish them both a very speedy recovery. **Emma Scott** joins the Palmerston team during February and March pregnancy-testing season as a full-time production animal vet. Emma has worked for Totally Vets on and off for the past 11 years and we are delighted to have her back. In Vietnam, **Pete** has now arrived on-farm and taken over from **Craig Tanner**, who returns to work this month after a well-earned break with his family.

Ginny and her husband Aaron have made the big move to the Hawke's Bay, from where Ginny will carry on working for Totally Vets in her current role. We will miss seeing Ginny's always-cheerful face around the clinic. However, with modern communication media as well as being back every few weeks for her on-call weekends, Monitor Farm meetings, etc, her availability and sage advice remain as accessible as they always have been!

Growing great heifers

Paul Wiseman

The end result of poorly-grown young stock impacts well into their first lactation. As yearlings, well-managed heifers get in calf quickly and calve early.

An excellent tool for identifying heifer-rearing problems in the herd is DairyNZ's InCalf Fertility Focus Report. The calving pattern and three-week submission rate of the first calvers indicate how well the heifers have been reared. Damage done to one and two-year old animals may be hard to undo.

It's not too late to carefully manage the next generation of heifers through careful monitoring. Make more frequent visits to where the heifers are grazing. Your "eyemeter" will not recognise failing growth rates as early as regular weighing of heifers. Scales provide the most accurate liveweight information. Weigh bands are better than nothing.

First to come under scrutiny if targets are not achieved is the feeding level and feed quality. Young animals must have high protein and carbohydrate feeds of high digestibility available at all times. Parasites may be implicated, followed by a multitude of other diseases causing ill-thrift.

Monitoring liveweight gain, in conjunction with suitably-timed faecal egg counts and an awareness of the grazing plan all contribute to best practice parasite management. All

farmers should consider a Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test to assess the level of resistance present. For example, if a white drench-resistant *Ostertagia* is present, a white/clear drench combination is not a good choice.

Drench recommendations are very much dependent on the level of resistance on the grazing property; the level and quality of feed available; and whether they're grazing perennial pasture or crop, new grass, or hay or silage aftermath. While a triple combination is best practice, a double combination may be more economic.

Totally Vets offers Growing Great Heifers, which includes all or any of the following: six group weighing sessions, a parasite management plan, plus a drench check, plus facial eczema awareness including spore counting and veterinary advice on replacement issues.

The eyes have it!

Leisa Spring-Norris

THE THREE MOST COMMON CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE EYES OF CATTLE ARE:

1. Pink eye or Infectious Bovine

Keratoconjunctivitis is a contagious eye disease that can affect cattle of all ages. It is caused by *Moraxella bovis*, but the severity of the disease is influenced by the presence of other micro-organisms. Flies are the main cause of infection spread; carrier animals are also important reservoirs of infection within a herd.

Damage to the cornea, from UV light, dust or pollen, is the main predisposing factor. Pink eye can resolve spontaneously but may cause blindness if left untreated. Signs include eye

ulcers, cloudiness of the eye and weeping, and swelling of the eyelids. Affected animals seek shade. The outcome is production loss and decreased growth rate due to reduction in feeding.

Treatment is antibiotic eye ointment.

Prevention is aimed at reducing exposure to dust and contact with flies (use of insecticides), minimising grazing on long stalky pasture and overcrowding as well as prompt removal of affected cattle from the mob. In the face of an outbreak, vaccines may be useful to reduce the spread and severity of disease.

2. Cancer eye or Squamous Cell Carcinoma

is highly malignant and can affect the eyeball, eyelids or third eyelid. Tumors start as small gray/white elevated lesions and evolve to larger irregular cauliflower-like lesions. They

may become infected and metastasize to local lymph nodes, lungs and liver. In the early stages, surgical removal may be warranted however there is no guarantee that all cancer cells will be removed and the cancer may recur. Consequently culling is often advised and a certificate of suitability for transport is mandatory. Be aware that a works' certificate does not guarantee that the carcass will pass meat inspection if there is evidence of spread. Regular inspection of all cows and culling of early cases is the best approach to dealing with cancer eye.

3. Trauma to the eye can occur if a foreign body contacts or lodges in the eye. The extent of the injury determines the outcome. Superficial injuries generally respond to conservative treatment while deep penetrating wounds may necessitate removal of the eye.





“The bloody vet got it wrong!”

Anita Renes

On dairy farms at calving time, a group of cows appears every year. These cows were pregnancy-tested in calf but are now found to be empty. Why does this occur and what can we do to minimise the numbers?

There are four reasons why cows diagnosed as pregnant end up empty at the end of calving:

1. 'Natural' pregnancy loss
2. 'Abnormal' pregnancy loss due to disease
3. Incor rect recording
4. Incor rect diagnosis

There is always a percentage of 'natural' pregnancy loss in any herd. Most of these are probably due to genetic abnormalities of the foetus or unknown reasons. It has been estimated that 10% of pregnancies are lost before five weeks - some of these will appear as long returns. A large trial conducted in the Waikato in 2005, in which cows were

pregnancy-tested every 2-4 weeks throughout their pregnancy, showed that from five weeks' gestation until calving, 7.2% of pregnancies are lost. **This means that for an average 400-cow herd mating for 12 weeks and pregnancy-testing 6 weeks after the bull comes out, 10-15 pregnancies will be lost between pregnancy-testing and calving (3.75%).** In our experience, most farms do not lose this many. However, if you are experiencing greater than 2% pregnancy loss, seek help. There are many possible causes that can be investigated including BVD virus and Neosporosis.

In recent years, herds have become larger, and due to improvements in technology, pregnancy-testing has become faster. This has led to a greater risk of human error in recording pregnancy-testing results. The following things are very important to reduce recording errors:

- Pregnancy-test at the right time
Accurate ageing of pregnancy can only be done between 6-12 weeks of gestation
- Timing depends on what you want to know
In-calf or not in-calf; estimate of due calving date; calving before or after a specified date
- Are you planning on inducing cows?
If so, cows must be pregnancy-tested at the right time to determine specific ages
- The recorder needs to be competent and focused, repeat cow numbers and result

back to the vet, and not be distracted by cell phones and cowshed banter

- Have someone marking cows and reading tags - a check for the recorder
- Print off your MINDA mating record sheet and use this to record with
- Ensure tags are clean, easily read and there are no double-ups
- Keep permanent records

If you have a split calving herd, each herd should be pregnancy-tested six weeks after mating ends to ensure accurate records. It is difficult to accurately distinguish spring and autumn calvers once pregnancies are greater than 12 weeks. Pregnancy records are very important in split-calving herds so that cows are dried-off at the right time to allow an adequate dry period and avoid bulk tank somatic cell count issues.

Totally Vets veterinarians are highly trained in pregnancy diagnosis so the incidence of a cow being called pregnant when she is empty, or vice versa, should be extremely rare. Ageing and early/late pregnancy diagnosis will be 90% accurate to within 2 weeks of gestational age.

Talk to us if you have concerns about the number of cows turning up empty in your herd at calving. There are a number of ways we can help, including planning pregnancy-testing timing to achieve the information you need. We can also provide a recorder.



monitor farm programme

Manawatu Monitor Farms

Combined Breeding/Finishing and Finishing Annual Seminar

WHEN 23rd February 2011

WHERE Feilding Civic Centre

FROM 1.00pm

WHERE WE ARE NOW AND WHERE WE NEED TO BE

- Wishnowsky Monitor Farm - Progress in a year of challenges
- District Monitoring Programme - A year of our own information
- Climate outlook
- What happens to that lamb? Boning demonstration courtesy of Ovation
- The lamb we need - Marketer's perspective
- Farm IQ - On-farm tools to produce the lamb we need
- Buffet-style barbeque dinner
- 'The Attitude Doctor' - Dr Tom Mulholland on how Healthy Thinking can help you turn life's lemons into lemonade

For catering purposes, please RSVP by the 18th February, 12pm to Greta on gretab@totallyvets.co.nz or (06) 323 6161



Upcoming Events

The Steinlager Totally Vets Classic Golf Tournament

Monday 14th March

Hokowhitu Golf Course, Palmerston North

Stacked Mixed Ambrose teams

11am shotgun start

\$15 per entry (conditions apply)

Entry fee can be charged to your current Totally Vets account

Nine holes or 18 holes available

Contact either clinic for your entry form

Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Details in our March VET notes