



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

MARCH 2012



Above: Margaret kayaking the Waimakariri river
(photo courtesy of Pauls Image Centre)

Margaret 5th in Coast to Coast!

A huge well done to our equine vet Margaret Leyland who was the 5th woman to cross the line in the two-day Coast to Coast event in February. The race consisted of 243km of kayaking, cycling and mountain running. With an overall time of 14:54:16, Margaret aced the bike with an 8th in that section, including the men!

The most mentally challenging leg was the kayak - her GPS ran out of charge, so she didn't know where she was going! The mountain running proved to be the most physically demanding - not a surprise when you're running for almost 5 hours on a demanding terrain!

Trace element testing

Anita Renes

Autumn is the optimal time to test for trace element levels. Trace element levels drop to their lowest point in the late winter/early spring. If levels are low in the autumn, they are likely to be even less in the late winter/early spring when animal demand from giving birth and starting a new lactation is greatest. Avoid springtime catastrophies by testing in the autumn.

From autumn testing we can:

1. Determine if there is a current deficit that could be affecting health and production. If cattle have been receiving zinc for facial eczema prevention, copper depletion may have occurred.
2. Check that there are enough reserves to buffer the depletion that occurs heading towards spring.
3. Assess whether the farm's supplementation policy is adequate. Cattle can be receiving

too little or too much of a particular trace element. There are numerous trace element products on the market with a very wide range of prices. Testing can help save you money in the long run.

Liver samples are the preferred method of testing trace element levels. For a routine check, they give us much more accurate information about trace element reserves and current levels than blood tests do. There are two ways cattle livers can be tested. Liver biopsies done by Totally Vets, or works livers tested from cull cows. Biopsies are generally preferred as we can be more certain that the animals tested represent the herd and repeat samples can be taken to monitor trends over time. Works-testing forms are available from Totally Vets if you prefer to use this method.

Pasture-testing can also be valuable in assessing trace element status alongside animal tests. High levels of antagonists in the pasture can reduce absorption of certain trace elements. Knowing the pasture analysis from your property can assist in deciding the best approach to supplementation.

Call Totally Vets to book in your liver biopsies or obtain a works-testing form.





Totally Vets current stock health

February was a favourable month for facial eczema (FE) spore proliferation in many regions. The weekly average minimum grass temperature was above 12°C for some time, with spore counts holding in some areas but rising in most. With moisture and more pasture litter this year, March, April and May spore counts will lift from what have been low to moderate counts. Absolute FE spore counts

are probably a less important indicator of risk than a rising spore count. Low counts will sensitise animals to higher exposures.

If you're not taking preventative measures then you should be.

Dairy

Prolonged and high doses of zinc for FE deplete copper reserves. Zinc also



HA HA

Five-minute management course

LESSON 5:

A little bird was flying south for the winter. It was so cold, the bird froze and fell to the ground into a large field.

While he was lying there, a cow came by and dropped some dung on him. As the frozen bird lay there in the pile of cow dung, he began to realize how warm he was. The dung was actually thawing him out!

He lay there all warm and happy, and soon began to sing for joy. A passing cat heard the bird singing and came to investigate. Following the sound, the cat discovered the bird under the pile of cow dung, and promptly dug him out and ate him.

Moral of the story:

1. Not everyone who shits on you is your enemy.
2. Not everyone who gets you out of shit is your friend.
3. And when you're in deep shit, it's best to keep your mouth shut!

Totally Vets prints **Vet Notes** on paper using FSC certified mixed source pulp from Well Managed forests and other controlled sources. The paper is produced under an environmental management system ISO 14001.



Pregnancy-scanning sheep

Guy Haynes

Our calculations show that \$1000 spent on pregnancy-scanning 1000 ewes can return \$5500 in increased income. If you're not already planning to pregnancy-test your flock, now is a good time to consider the many benefits of doing so.

This increased income comes from knowing which ewes are carrying more than one lamb. Being able to prevent just these ewes from losing any more condition, lifting the condition of just the light ones of these ewes and allocating safe paddocks and more grass to these ewes all result in more and bigger lambs.

Should multiples be run on their own from scanning? If feed is short and ewes are going to be underfed then it is better that multiples get the pick right from scanning. If there is still some paddock cleaning-up to do and ewe

condition is OK, then there is more to gain by using the power and efficiency of bigger mobs.

The advantages of knowing the pregnancy status of your ewes also include being able to quit non-productive dry ewes. The feed eaten by non-productive dry ewes can then go to productive pregnant animals.

Single-bearing ewes can be relegated to more difficult areas of the farm.

Both our experienced operators are able to take on a small number of new clients this season.

Clients who regularly take advantage of the scanning service offered by Totally Vets and Premier Breeding Services will receive booking forms in the mail.

If you do not receive a booking form or wish to invest in the benefits of scanning, contact Totally Vets on 06 323 6161.

Alternatively our experienced scanners are happy to discuss your individual requirements and the services we can offer. For more information without obligation, please contact Ross Edwards on 0274 402 032 or Guy Haynes on 0274 555 424.





interferes with copper absorption so the copper mixed with your zinc treatment may not be of much benefit. FE-damaged livers are more prone to copper toxicity. So it does pay to check liver copper status as zinc treatment ends and before injecting with copper.

Organise your lepto vaccinations, especially your heifer replacements. Young stock will be running out of trace elements they received from their mum. And the autumn is when

we see most clinical parasitism - use a combination drench.

Start to set your herd up for a top production and reproduction performance next season by planning to dry them off close to the condition you would like to calve them down in.

Sheep & Beef

The big reduction in feed quality is bringing out all the usual nasties in young stock on sheep & beef properties. We have been

dealing with a number of cases of scouring weaner calves. The cause of these has been quite varied, although worm larval challenge is no doubt part of the mix in most. The cooler wetter summer has not been very conducive to Barber's Pole worm in lambs. Although we did hear of some suspect cases earlier in January, the monitoring we have been doing lately has not highlighted this worm as an issue. But look out for problems with *Trichostrongylus* ('black scour worm') as the autumn progresses.



Induction reduction in 2012

Paul Wiseman

Progress in reducing the number of cows induced to calve early in 2011 was positive, thanks to the excellent work of farmers throughout the country.

Data contributed by veterinary practices indicate that while a third of farms did perform inductions, fewer cows were induced. Figure 1 compares the proportions of herds induced nationally in 2010 and 2011.

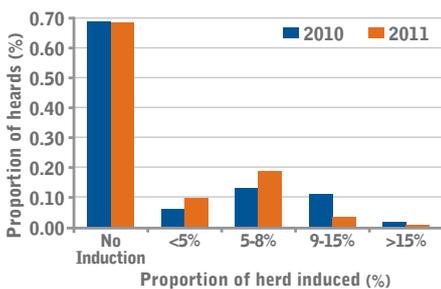


Figure 1: Comparison of induction rates for 2010 and 2011 - data based on information provided by veterinary practices.

Representatives of the Memorandum of Understanding stakeholders (New Zealand Veterinary Association, Federated Farmers, Dairy NZ and Dairy Companies Assn of NZ) reaffirmed the individual farm target for routine calving inductions for 2012 as 4%. Dairy company representatives have been conducting their own follow-up audit procedures with farmers, and reinforcing with farmers that the target for 2012 is 4%.

Dispensations from the 4% target will only be granted where there is clear evidence that the predisposing circumstances were beyond the control of the farmer such as AB failure, outbreak of disease in the herd, major weather-related issues such as regionally declared drought, or serious ill-health on the part of the farmer. Reasons such as "poor body condition score" or "poor reproduction management" will not be accepted.

Clients purchasing cows to expand or establish new herds should also be reminded that pregnancy-testing information is a mandatory requirement where they intend to induce the cows being purchased.

A clearly defined recovery plan identifying the steps that will be taken to reduce future induction levels must also be provided. Dispensations must be submitted to the

database manager who will then initiate the request with the relevant dairy company representatives.

For the dispensation process to be timely, it is important that induction lists and plans are developed as soon as possible after pregnancy-testing data are available. The guidelines indicate that plans and lists should be finalised at least 60 days before the start of calving. For a planned calving start of July 10th, this means list and plans must be written by May 10th. Veterinarians are not permitted to make their own decisions on whether farmers can exceed the target. Applications for dispensation must be submitted to the database manager.

Totally Vets clients are to be congratulated for their continued progress with induction reduction. Approximately 20% of Totally Vets clients induced less than 2% of cows in our catchment area - less than the national figures. Inductions continue to be a management tool predominately used in larger herds.

If you have further queries or wish to discuss specific cases, please do not hesitate to contact your Totally Vets veterinarian.

Body-condition score and submission rate campaign

Paul Wiseman

DairyNZ plans to deliver a submission rate campaign seeking to increase the 3-week submission rate (SR) to the industry standard of 90% for MA cows. Data are not available but industry opinion suggests currently that the average 3-week SR sits at 80%. Closing this performance gap is likely to result in a 5-6% improvement in the 6-week in-calf-rate and captures almost half of the improvement required to achieve the industry target.

The 3-week SR is a key component of reproductive performance and the parameter that is likely to have the greatest impact on closing the performance gap between current national performance of 64% and industry target of 78% 6-week in-calf-rate.

Submission rate is determined by the number of cows cycling (cycling rate) and those cycling cows being identified and submitted for mating (heat detection).

$$SR = \text{cycling rate} \times \text{heat detection efficiency}$$

The likelihood of a cow cycling is influenced by:

- Condition at mating (body-condition score)
- Time from calving until planned start of mating
- Nutrition (to small extent)

It has been well documented that cows lose condition between calving and mating. Nutrition has little impact on this body-condition score (BCS) loss. Therefore, it is important that cows have adequate condition prior to calving to allow for this BCS loss and achieve a minimum BCS of 4 at mating. Hence the recommended BCS targets at calving are:

MA cows	5
Heifers and R3s	5.5

The greater the proportion of cows within a herd that are below BCS 5 at calving, the poorer the reproductive performance is likely to be.

Typically herds are calving with 60-65% cows below target BCS. If the below target proportion was reduced to 15%, a **3% increase** in 6-week in-calf-rate, and 1% reduction in empty rate would be expected. This improvement equates to **\$22 per cow**

across the whole herd. Improved BCS also has milk production benefits. Whole farm modeling work concluded that reproductive and production benefits resulted in a total net gain in profitability of \$60-\$80 per cow.

In summary the benefits of achieving target BCS at calving are:

1. Profit
2. More milk solids
3. Better reproduction - less wastage
4. A risk buffer
5. Better animal health

For 30 years, the importance of BCS has been emphasised, so why do we miss these targets?

1. Below target BCS at drying off?
2. Financial pressure?
3. An incorrect perception of BCS?
4. Is it because the modern cow can't do it?
5. Does inconsistent BCS assessment influence credibility?

Totally Vets has invested heavily in upskilling in BCS assessment and strategies to achieve BCS targets at calving. On receipt of your invitation from DairyNZ to participate in their BCS/SR campaign, tick Totally Vets as your chosen trained adviser.

Your vet will discuss this opportunity when completing pregnancy testing.

What's the goss?

Congratulations to **Barney, Al, Jade, Charlie** and **Tabitha** on the safe arrival of **Eleanor Rowan Askin** on 3rd February. Everyone is doing really well and Al assures us they will be stopping at four!

More wedding bells for Totally Vets with **Lucy Cahill** and partner **Daniel Russell** announcing their engagement. Lucy is sporting a beautiful sparkler, which she can't stop staring at - keeping her eyes on the road has had its moments... Well done you two!

A huge well done to **Catherine's** daughter **Calla** who was a junior member of the Manawatu Pony Club Team that went to Cambridge in January for the North Island Pony Club Show Jumping Champs. Calla and the other junior member **Nathan Dallas** got 5th place out of 33 teams in the Jigsaw event. This is a speed event involving two riders jumping in the arena simultaneously. The highlight was cantering around to the music with their big fat shiny black ribbons on!

Margaret Leyland, aka **Peg**, is feeling great after her Coast to Coast event a few weeks ago. She is already eyeing up next year's race, so watch this space. An essential aspect

of the race is the support crew who help at each transition. This year, she was fortunate to have the services of our very own **Craig Dickson**, who obviously did an excellent job. Craig enjoyed it but has hinted he might be joining Margaret next year on the course - he is keeping very quiet about having done one in a previous life...

Four of our team will be swapping their scrub tops and uniform for lycra and taking part in the Tui Brewery Bush Cycle Tour on 11th March. **Kellie, Suzanne** and **Charmaine** will be completing the 60km distance and **Christine** the 110km course - good luck girls and go easy on the refreshments when you get to your destination! Yeah right.



Making the best of a bad silage in a wet year

Allie Quinn

“We know the silage is poor quality, but I’ve still got to feed it out. What can we do?” Much of this year’s grass silage is too wet, with a high pH, high ammonia and low energy. There are no magic additives or ‘fixits’ for a bad silage once it is in the stack.

A few suggestions are as follows:

NOTE: Abortion and health risk - very poor-quality silages and baleage can cause abortion in pregnant stock (especially cattle) and cause disease, e.g. listeriosis. If in doubt, do not feed the silage and/or discuss further with your veterinarian.

1. Silage handling at feed out

Poor-quality silage contains lots of ammonia and the wrong types of acids which equates to more wastage at feedout. It’s hard to overcome this problem, but consider the following:

- **Dig out the worst patches**

As you load the wagon, use a shovel to flick off dark coloured smelly areas, e.g. black layer on the top/patches around mud or weeds. Mixing rotten patches

in with the rest of the silage makes the whole lot taste bad = more feed refusal

- **Mixing different stacks?**

Don’t mix good with poor-quality silage in one load - you’ll reduce utilisation of the lot

Don’t feed out silage several days ahead of stock

High pH silage rots more quickly than good silage. Load the wagon and feed out right before stock access the silage

2. Feed testing

This helps you decide the best use/best fit for each silage, e.g. for a dairy farmer

- Very poor-quality silages: later-calving dry cows (early in the dry period) or cows through dry-off. Ideally, rotten silage should NOT be fed to pregnant animals at all
- Moderate-quality silages: early dry period
- Better-quality silages: for milking cows and/or young stock
- Never feed rotten silage to springer and colostrum cows

Feed tests can’t accurately predict risk of feed refusal, abortion or disease, but you can suspect a poor fermentation if the pH is high:

Grass silage DM Content	Probability of poor fermentation if pH is HIGHER than:
15%	4.1
20%	4.2
25%	4.35
30%	4.5

Ammonia levels are often high with a poor fermentation.

3. Feed budgeting

Allow for more silage wastage in your feed planning. This increases your total feed requirement and/or reduces amounts of feed ‘down the throat’ of stock.

Rework the numbers to make sure there’s enough feed. If you plan to feed, e.g. 4 kgDM of silage ‘down the throat’ of dry dairy cows on swedes:

- In a very good year, you might work on 85% silage utilisation = $4/0.85 = 4.7$ kgDM offered/cow/day
- With poor-quality silage, cattle may waste, e.g. another 20% = $4/0.65 = 6.2$ kgDM offered/cow/day

Early pregnancy-testing:

Pregnancy test early so empty/unwanted stock can be culled.

4. Balancing poor-quality silages with other feeds in the diet

Stock can cope with some poor-quality silage if the rest of the diet is good-quality/high-energy feed, e.g. lush leafy grass, good-quality swedes, kale or rape or high-energy feeds such as high-quality cereal silage, grain or molasses. Molasses poured on silage can sometimes be useful to get stock to ‘come onto’ poor-quality feed.

Discuss specific concerns about your silage and feed test results with your veterinarian.

Article written with permission from Charlotte Westwood BVSc, MACVSc, PhD Veterinary Nutritionist.

Feeding turnips to cattle

Leisa Norris

Turnips are a member of the *Brassica* family of plants, which also includes rape, kale and swedes. They are an annual forb, neither a legume or a grass and, in general, are cold, drought and heat tolerant, and resistant to aphids while providing excellent forage quality.

Turnips have a valuable place as a grazing forage for many stock types and classes, including sheep in areas where cold temperatures limit grass growth in late autumn and winter. To prevent wastage, stock are normally break-fed on root crops which are sometimes sown in conjunction with grass to

reduce the risk of associated health issues and to add bulk and quality.

At a cost of \$0.07 cents kg/DM (compared to around \$0.12 cents a kg/DM for home-grown maize silage), turnips are very economic.

Turnips are also a low input crop because the stock harvest them for you. Turnips vary in yield (5-8 tonne DM/ha), maturity (estimated average days to grazing 60-90 days), size, keeping, and quality of the bulb.

There are potential health issues with cattle grazing turnips. These include nitrate poisoning, ruminal acidosis, bloat, red water, choke, polioencephalomalacia, diarrhoea, copper and/or selenium deficiency and photosensitisation. In New Zealand, photosensitisation due to grazing of turnips in summer, especially if they are under drought stress, is the most common health problem seen. The risks of feeding turnips are greatest when:

- They are fed before maturity
- Excess sulphur or nitrogen fertiliser has been applied
- They have been stressed by disease or water restrictions

However, with correct grazing management, the above risks can be minimised. Most problems occur within the first two weeks of introduction to turnips, so allow cows to adapt to the crop. For the first 10-14 days, cattle should be 'filled up' with pasture or supplements (hay or silage) before accessing the turnips. All cows should go onto the turnips together to prevent gorging by a few; initial time on the crop should be 1-2 hours or less. Finally, ensure that adequate voltage is maintained and double fence breaks are in place to prevent breakouts. Graze the crop at the optimal stage of maturity for the species/cultivar as immature or over-mature crops can be dangerous.

As an added note, for dairy cows after the transition period, standard practice is to allow access after the morning milking. This avoids milk taint caused by feeding the crop close to the afternoon milking, but can mean that cows go on hungry with that the first milkers can be at increased risk. If possible, provide alternative feed prior to access and feed only 35% of the diet as turnips for milking cows.

Turn angry bulls into Agreeabulls

Paul Wiseman

Agreeabulls are less likely to exhibit aggressive and sexual behaviours, which takes some of the hassle out of farming bulls. For the first time, farmers can enjoy the benefits of running more easily manageable bulls in their production systems. We call these animals Agreeabulls.

Bopriva™ is a unique new vaccine for the temporary reduction of testosterone in bulls. Testosterone is the key hormone affecting male sexual and aggressive behaviours. Through its effect on testosterone, Bopriva™ reduces aggressive and sexual behaviours in bulls, providing farmers with a highly effective management tool.

The first dose of Bopriva™ primes the immune system. A second dose acts as a booster and

stimulates the production of high levels of specific antibodies that effectively reduce testosterone release for approximately three months.

The temporary reduction in testosterone in bulls results in decreased sexual and aggressive behaviour.

When the vaccine's effect wears off, the testosterone levels rise and Agreeabulls revert to bulls.

The duration of the testosterone suppression is dependent on the interval between the first and second vaccinations. Farmers can use the effect of vaccination interval to manipulate the length of Agreeabull behaviour, to suit their own systems and objectives.

Careful planning of the vaccination dates is required. To achieve the best results from Bopriva™ farmers must answer two questions. When do I want the Bopriva™ effect to start? How long do I want it to last?

Bopriva™ may result in improvements in the following behaviours:

- Fighting
- Pawing, digging and pasture damage

- Sexual mounting
- Damage to infrastructure such as fences
- Bellowing
- Dominance and territorial behaviour

Potential benefits for bull farmers:

- Reduced labour
- More grazing management options
- Better pasture - less damage, pugging and faster re-growth
- Fewer injuries or deaths from fighting and riding
- Less damage to fences and infrastructure

Bopriva™ allows farmers to benefit from the natural growth rate advantages associated with rearing bulls versus steers, and without the need for surgical castration or the use of artificial hormonal growth promotants.

For more information, talk to Totally Vets.

Bopriva is a registered trade mark of Pfizer. Registered pursuant to the ACVM Act 1997, No A9931. Prescription Animal Remedy (P.A.R.) Class 1. For use only under the authority or prescription of a veterinarian.



Quarantine drenching - not as simple as you think!

Ginny Dodunski

The aim of a quarantine drench to bought-in stock is to prevent the importation of drench-resistant worms onto your property.

However you probably already have worms with some level of drench resistance. It is normal in our area to find moderate to severe resistance to the individual white, clear and 'mectin' families in one or more species of worms. Also common are double-combination resistant sheep worms (and cattle worms, where we have looked). Given that this resistance problem is 'everywhere' and no one seems to have gone out of business yet, why worry about quarantine drenching?

Because there are farms where even triple-combinations are shown to be failing, and where that favourite standby Cydectin® is failing badly. For every farm that knows this, you can bet there are another 10+ in a similar situation that haven't tested. Resistance of this magnitude has an appreciable impact on performance and begins to significantly limit some of your management options.

So it would make sense to stay out of this territory! Bought-in lambs and calves represent the biggest risk of importing drench-resistant worms, but those buying in replacement ewes should also have a properly thought-out quarantine protocol in place.

Protocol - as important as the product

While it's really important to use a product that has a high chance of removing drug-resistant worms from new stock before they hit your pastures, just using a flash product could be useless if the quarantine procedure isn't managed properly.

The first consideration is how long to hold new arrivals off your pastures. Your quarantine drench will begin to kill adult worms and worm larvae in the gut within hours of being administered - probably 12 hours will have the bulk of them dead/dying or at least unable to lay eggs. 24 hours would be safer. Either way there needs to be some consideration at least of water for stock while they are held in yards or a bare area (where larvae won't develop or be consumed).

While a highly effective quarantine drench will knock the adult and immature worms in the gut within probably 12 hours of dosing, it may take much longer for the eggs already laid to pass out of the animal, and many drench chemicals are not ovicidal (don't kill eggs). So there will be a period of time (1-3 days) where your highly effective drench has killed all the adults and larvae, but there are still resistant eggs passing out in the faeces.

Zolvix® is not ovicidal, and whether or not the derquantel component of Startect® is ovicidal

is not known. The abamectin component of Startect® will be ovicidal for abamectin-susceptible worms, but given that abamectin resistance is fairly common, we can't assume that Startect® will be ovicidal either.

If drug-resistant eggs are deposited onto a bare yard where they won't develop, great, but no one wants to keep lambs in a yard for three days!

Hence the recommendation to graze new arrivals on the most contaminated areas of the farm for at least a few days - any resistant eggs that pass out should be 'diluted' by the mixed-worm population already present. Certainly don't put quarantine-drenched stock onto new grass or other low-contamination areas.

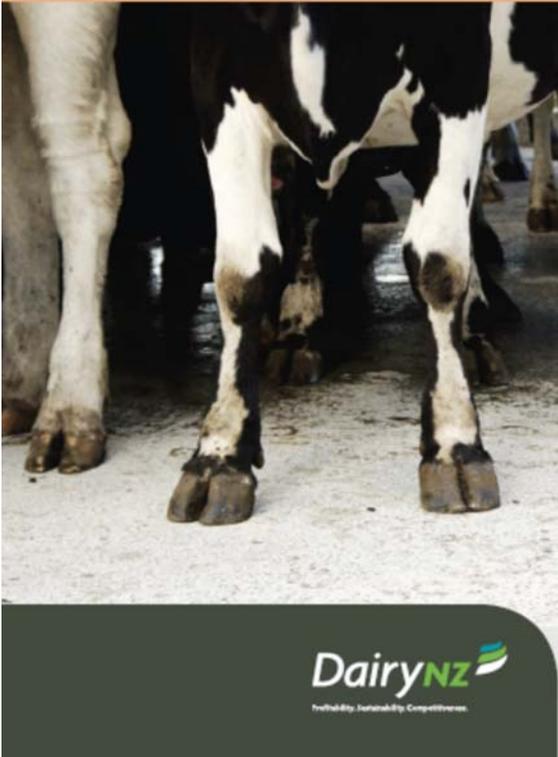
Product choice

We want our quarantine drench to have the highest chance of removing all drench-resistant worms, including the nasties from those properties that already have triple-combination resistance.

So if you are really doing the job properly, a triple combination isn't enough - at least in sheep. We are still recommending a triple for calves however. The parasitologists in Australia are now recommending a combination of FOUR unrelated actives, one of which should be Zolvix®. Technically this is the most sound advice, and comes out around \$1.00 per lamb. Though are we at the point where we need to go this far? I'm still mulling on this one, but in the meantime have a chat to your friendly Totally Vets sheep vet on the most appropriate quarantine drench for your operation.

Healthy Hoof Programme

Reducing lameness one step at a time



DairyNZ
Inclusivity. Sustainability. Competitiveness.

“Do you want to train your staff in the comprehensive understanding of dairy herd lameness?”

“Do you want to improve your skills in dealing with dairy cow lameness?”

“Find out what Healthy Hoof is all about?”

“Discover how Healthy Hoof can make a difference to lameness issues on your farm?”

Totally Vets brings you Neil Chesterton from Inglewood Veterinary Services to provide Totally Vets clients with a most comprehensive lameness seminar.

“Neil offers what is most probably one of the best if not the best training packages you will find in the world.”

Your technical knowledge and hands-on experience in dealing with lame animals on farm will be hugely improved by the training of ‘Stamping out lameness’.

WHEN 22nd March 2012

WHERE Totally Vets, 25 Manchester Street, Feilding

TIME 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Followed by light refreshments.

To express your interest in this seminar, please register on the Totally Vets website www.totallyvets.co.nz, phone **06 323 6161** or **06 356 5011**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Steinlager Totally Vets Classic Golf Tournament

Monday 12th March 2012
Hokowhitu Golf Course, Palmerston North

Stacked Mixed Ambrose teams
11am shotgun start.

Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Saturday 21st April 2012

In conjunction with the Wanganui Fishing Club Launch from the Castlecliff boat ramp at 6am.

\$15 per entry (*conditions apply*)

Entry fee can be charged to your current Totally Vets account
Contact either clinic for your entry form.