



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

APRIL 2012



Above: Manawatu/Rangitikei/Horowhenua Dairy Industry Awards 2012, Shane True, winner of Dairy Trainee of the Year

Dairy trainee of the year winner

Josh and Rebecca Dondertman are to be congratulated on convening yet another excellent muster of entrants for the 2012 Dairy Industry Awards.

Shaun and Liza Conner took out the Sharemilker/Equity Farmer with Duncan and Kim Fraser runner up.

Farm Manager of the Year went to Matt Johnson followed by Michael and Raewyn Hills and Justin Todd.

Shane True won the Dairy Trainee of the Year with Dale Pratt and Tara Millar as runners up.

Totally Vets is pleased to be associated with these awards and extends our heartiest congratulations to all who entered, organised or took part.

Two new graduates join Totally Vets

Aimee Perrett

We are delighted to welcome **Ryan Carr and Helen Mather**, our two new large animal vets, who join Totally Vets as new graduates.

Although they are large animal vets, their induction programme involves alternating two weeks in our small animal hospital with two weeks out with the large animal vets. Time is spent in the hospital developing their surgical skills, getting to know the team and the support that is available to them once they are out in the field.



Ryan Carr

Ryan hails from Whangarei, is married to Catherine and they live in Palmerston North. Running keeps him fit and he is really looking forward to the snowboarding season as well as joining the squash club. He thinks the Manawatu is just great and intends to put down some serious roots.

Ryan faced his first major challenge the other day when the power went off while he was speying a cat - he wasn't phased one little bit and just carried on with the help of some bright torches and nerves of steel.

There are obviously vet genes in Ryan and Helen's families as both have siblings who are also vets. As a youngster, Ryan's sister used to take him out on calls and he is certain this is what inspired him to choose this career path. Helen's older brother is a large animal vet in Oamaru.



Helen Mather

Helen grew up in Invercargill and enjoys netball. She also likes to run but hasn't for a while which means it'll be hard when she gets back into it! She is also very musical and plays the oboe and sings, as well as being into arts and crafts. She loves the outdoors and is saving up for some new tramping boots. Her partner Dylan is studying for a Masters in Aquaculture - all the way in Tasmania - so not an option to just 'pop over' to see one another!

After their induction, Ryan will join the large animal vet team in Feilding, while Helen will be working with the production animal vets in Palmerston North. Both will continue to do some small animal work in the hospital. We are very excited about having them as part of our team and know you will enjoy them too.



Totally Vets current stock health

Dairy

Getting drying off right is the foundation for next season. They say the difference between a successful farmer and one who is not so successful is in the decisions they make.

On the dairying calendar, April is a critical decision-making time. Making sound drying-off decisions based on body-condition score will hold you in good stead next season.

Is it true that we're slow to recognise changes in people and animals that we see every day? Using Totally Vets to independently BCS your herd will have benefits for you.

It can be a hectic time with selecting culls, drying-off decisions, financial balancing, staff reviews, etc. Just to add to your woes, may



HA HA

Two woman were playing golf...

Two women were playing golf. One teed off and watched in horror as her ball headed directly toward a foursome of men playing the next hole.

The ball hit one of the men. He immediately clasped his hands together at his groin, fell to the ground and proceeded to roll around in agony. The woman rushed down to the man, and immediately began to apologise.

'Please allow me to help. I'm a Physical Therapist and I know I could relieve your pain if you'd allow me', she told him.

'Oh, no, I'll be all right. I'll be fine in a few minutes,' the man replied. He was in obvious agony, lying in the foetal position, still clasping his hands there at his groin. At her persistence, however, he finally allowed her to help. She gently took his hands away and laid them to the side, loosened his pants and put her hands inside. She administered tender and artful massage for several long moments and asked, 'How does that feel?'

'Feels great', he replied; 'but I still think my thumb's broken!'

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Constipation in working dogs

Helen Sheard

Constipation is a relatively common and potentially debilitating problem. It is seen most often in older un-neutered males as the prostate enlarges and starts to compress the large bowel; similarly, bitches that are prone to this problem seem to be more likely to get constipated when they come on heat.

Other risk factors include:

- Dehydration, for example from illness or working in the heat
- Scavenging dogs that eat bones, wool, hair etc
- Previous injuries to the pelvis or tail that mean the dog can no longer squat or defaecate as normal
- 'Clean' dogs that won't toilet in their runs, and will hold on until they are let out

Repeat episodes of constipation can lead to a condition known as megacolon - that is, the colon becomes stretched, and fills up with more faeces than normal before it gets the signal to empty. Because fluid is normally reabsorbed from faeces by the colon, the longer the faeces are present, the drier and harder they become.

If you notice your dog straining to defecate without passing anything, try giving two tablespoons of cooking oil on some dog roll. If this hasn't helped within 6-8 hours, please ring us for an appointment so that you can bring your dog into the clinic as soon as possible.

Treatment involves IV fluids to 'overhydrate' the body, enemas to soften and break up the faecal mass, and often a general anesthetic to manually remove the hardened faeces.

After a bout of constipation, it is very important to feed only a highly digestible diet so the faeces aren't so bulky. Normally we advise no bones at all. Notorious scavengers should wear a cage muzzle when they are let out.

Neutering or spaying is also recommended for repeat offenders that have enlarged prostates or problems when they come on heat.





we remind you that young stock should be receiving their primary lepto vaccination - if they haven't already!

Also animal health reviews need to cover off the basics such as authorisation of drying-off antibiotics, lepto vaccine and next season's registered veterinary medicines (RVMS).

To find the latest local info' on Facial Eczema visit www.totallyvets.co.nz

Sheep & Beef

Sheep and deer breeders begin to measure the success of their mating plans. Those intending to assess the outcomes of herd and flock mating should be arranging for their animals to be scanned for pregnancy. Scanning is not only a measure of mating success; it is also a tool to be used to prepare for better returns from lambing and fawning.

Hogget vaccination with 5-in-1 should also be carried out now.

Quarantine drenching of any bought-in stock - irrespective of species - is one biosecurity measure that is pretty obvious. The autumn is the peak period for worm egg output and is also when we see most clinical parasitism. Current pasture contamination carried over the winter is the initial source of challenge for spring-born calves.



Managing drying-off

Paul Wiseman

PLANNING

Consulting with your veterinarian can help determine the date of dry-off. The dry period needs to be long enough to allow the udder to regenerate. Also influencing the decision when to dry off are:

CONDITION SCORE (CS)

- Cows need to be dried off with a long enough dry period to be at CS5 by calving
- Cows calving at lower CS will produce less and have more reproductive problems. A cow calving at CS4 produces 15kgMS less than if she calved at CS5
- Dry cows must be fed like lactating cows to gain one CS in 30-40 days

PASTURE COVER

- Cows must be dried off according to feed-budget targets
- In general, herd demand is greater than winter growth; therefore pasture cover will tend to decline

- If cows need to gain condition, more grass (or supplement) will be required and a faster rotation needed. This means less feed at the start of calving

MILK PRODUCTION AND SOMATIC CELL COUNT (SCC)

- When herd production drops below 10L/cow/day, start planning drying off. Dry off low CS cows early, to allow more time for feeding to increase CS

TO AVOID SCC GRADES

- Dry off high SCC cows (>500,000 cells/ml) early to avoid the risk of grading
- Dry off low-producing cows early before their SCC increases as they dry themselves off naturally. [Low producers = < 0.4kgMS/cow/day (approximately 5L for Friesians and 4L for Jerseys)]
- If the bulk tank milk somatic cell count (BTSCC) is greater than 350,000 cells/ml, dry off selected cows as above, or dry off the whole herd

DRYING OFF PROCEDURES

Milking

- Dry off low-yielding and high SCC cows early - especially if at risk of grading for SCCs

- Once daily milking is NOT necessary in the final week, particularly if the herd is already below 10L/cow/day
- Do not practise 'skip a day' milking. This increases milk SCCs and susceptibility to mastitis

Feed intake

- For cows giving more than 10L, reduce or alter feed intake in the final week before dry off. A change in the nature of the diet rather than a reduction can stimulate the cow to dry off
- If yields are below 10L, further milk yield reductions are not required before drying off. Studies indicate that cows producing 11L/day before dry off have more mastitis than those producing 4L
- Reduce intakes to maintenance levels for seven days after the final milking before increasing feed to gain condition
- Keep water available at all times

A study of factors around drying off and the dry period that influence SCCs in the following season showed an increase in SCCs on farms where feed was restricted. This may have been due to nutritional stress or loss of condition on the cows' ability to resist new infections during the dry period.

Big is good

Paul Wiseman

Body-condition score (BCS), the body bank, whatever you choose to call it, has a far greater return than most other forms of conventional investment. What's more, you even have a very high level of control over any investment you make in the bank or the score.

No matter how it is achieved, mixed-age cows calving at BCS 5.0 and first and second calvers at 5.5 **produce more milk solids, come into season earlier and have higher conception rates** than cows that don't make these targets. There are a number of different autumn/winter management options for getting cows to target BCS at calving. What is the cost of reaching target versus doing nothing and calving cows in lower condition? Is there money in this BCS?

Never having been a particularly scientific veterinarian, I see what farmers see. Very recently I had the privilege of pregnancy-testing two dairy herds, each milking around 800 cows. The herds on these farms are split into two mobs of approximately 400 each. The first mob is formed from the early-calving, cows and generally fills within 3 weeks of calving start. The second mob forms from cows calving from the fourth week until the end of calving, approximately five weeks later.

On each of the farms, the pregnancy rate was 5% and 8.4% in the early-calving herds. The in-calf rate in the later-calving herds was 11.6% and 12.4% respectively.

A mob BCS carried out while pregnancy testing in one of these herds scored the early mob BCS 4 and the late mob 3.7 compared with a BCS of 4.2 given by the farm consultant at calving time.

If we back-track a little and accept the fact that BCS 5 and 5.5 cows get in calf earlier, then they also calve earlier and get back in calf earlier. Or you might say the biggest proportion of empty cows come from the late-calving cows. This is why we focus so much

these days on the 6-week in-calf rate, where it can be measured. The rule of thumb being that anything calving later than 6 weeks is late.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to get every cow close to her ideal BCS at calving.

- Drying off low-producing fat cows early
- Ensure heifers are on track for weight and BCS
- Give the first calvers more time dry than older cows
- Split dry herds on BCS and time until calving
- Stagger dry-off based on BCS and time until calving
- Part season once a day (OAD) milking for all or part of the herd

The welfare and health benefits of BCS 5+ are all extras. Enjoy them.

For an independent BCS assessment and assistance with a plan to achieve BCS 5+ at calving, contact Totally Vets.



What's the goss?

Congratulations to **Pip**, our sheep and beef extension technician, who got engaged in March on her birthday. Her very romantic fiancé **Mike** claimed he needed help with a broken pipe on the farm, so Pip dutifully followed him to the pipe, which happened to be by a beautiful waterfall and a bridge! The rest, as they say, is history - Pip and Mike plan to wed in Wanaka next year.

The cycling girls of Totally Vets had a great ride at the Bush Cycle Tour in Mangatainoka

on 11 March. Good weather and solid training for the event meant **Charmaine, Suzanne** and **Kellie** flew round the 55k course like they had wings, particularly Charmaine who came 5th in 1:48:17 - her first bike race! Christine also did herself proud on the 110k ride which she nailed in 3:54:46. This will be great preparation for the five-day Otago Rail Trail bike tour she will be doing with her sisters and **Diane**.

A huge welcome back to **Julie Christensen**, who returns to TVL after her maternity leave. Julie will be working Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays at the Feilding branch and we know you will

recognise her bubbly and smiley face at reception as soon as you come in! Her son **Noah** has adapted to Mum going back to work very well - not surprising as he has the luxury of both his grandmothers looking after him, including our very own **Glenda**.

We promise there was no tournament fixing at the TVL golf tournament on 12th March! A great day was had by all, with the weather coming up trumps. Unfortunately, **Hamish** not only won the tournament, but ALSO the longest drive AND got a prize in the raffle! It was even more embarrassing when **Barny** and **Guy and Greg** a got raffle prize despite getting them redrawn...



Why does a cow need a dry period?

Paul Wiseman

At the end of lactation, dairy cows need a dry period that is sufficiently long to allow the udder tissue to repair and rejuvenate.

The number of cells in the udder that make milk declines as lactation progresses. During the dry period, new milk-making cells are laid down when cows start to 'freshen' ready for calving, so that the total amount of milk-making cells increases from one lactation to the next.

The optimal dry period for this revitalisation and recharging of the udder is 60 days. If cows are not dried off at all, the next lactation yield may be as much as 25-30% lower.

Another critical change that happens at the start of the drying-off period and is critical for preventing new infections over the remainder of the dry period is the closure of the teat canal with a keratin plug, which is made from the cells lining the teat canal. **More than 20% of quarters do not have a teat plug by 6 weeks after drying-off.**

In dry-cow treated quarters in the first four weeks of the dry period, there is an increase in the proportion of closed teat canals compared to untreated quarters.

The length of the dry period impacts on the daily milk yield achieved the following lactation. Age, inter-calving interval, and milk yield prior to drying-off influence the dry period required to maximise yields in the subsequent lactation. To achieve optimal yields, younger cows need longer dry periods than older cows, and cows producing more milk require longer dry periods than their herd mates.

A review of 18 studies concluded the best production in the next lactation was obtained from 40-60 day dry periods. In New Zealand, most cows will have a dry period that is longer than 60 days, but in some herds that operate split calving, keeping track of individual cow dry periods becomes more difficult. Care should be taken to ensure that all cows benefit from a dry period of at least 6-8 weeks.

It is also important to know the length of the dry period to ensure selection of a dry-cow therapy product that minimises the risk of antibiotics in milk in the next lactation.

Selecting a herd approach to managing the dry-off strategy must be a planned event. The Smart SAMM recommendation is to ensure that **all cows are protected by some form of treatment during the dry period.** This will likely include use of antibiotics in high SCC cows, with cows with lower SCC being treated with DCT or internal teat sealant.

Is your herd at high risk or low risk of infection with contagious or environmental bacteria? Identifying which part of this risk matrix your herd lies in will largely determine the best drying-off strategy for you.

Matrix approach - for selecting a herd approach based on its mastitis risk profile.

		Risk of contagious mastitis	
		Low	High
Risk of environmental mastitis	Low		
	High		

Recognising the risk profile for your herd requires certain information.

1. History of DCT over the past 12 months.
2. Incidence of clinical mastitis during the dry period and at calving.
3. Incidence of clinical mastitis through the current lactation.
4. Average BTSCC during the current lactation.
5. Individual cow SCC, (herd tests).
6. Identification of the mastitis bugs.
7. Management considerations such as grazing off of dry cows.

With this information, your veterinarian can assist with a strategy for drying-off that will:

1. Treat existing infections.
2. Prevent new infections during the dry period.
3. Protect uninfected quarters during the dry period and at calving.
4. Reduce mastitis and control SCC into the next lactation.

Make milk quality part of your annual animal health review with Totally Vets.

Lungworm in cattle and deer

Hamish Pike

Lungworm infection in deer, previously believed to be caused by cattle lungworm, has been proven to be caused by the deer-adapted lungworm. It is the most important parasite in farmed deer in New Zealand, and is present on every deer farm. Cattle lungworm has also been shown to affect deer, although it is less well adapted to red deer.

In New Zealand, severe clinical disease in cattle is uncommon but some farms do have problems. Disease in cattle is seen more often in dairy calves in the main dairy areas. This is probably

a result of high stocking rates and separate grazing regimes of young and adult stock associated with dairy farming. The prevalence varies considerably from one farm to the next. High levels of resistance establish quickly in animals exposed to small larval challenges. Disease in yearlings and adult cattle is seldom, if ever, seen in New Zealand probably because they are grazed continuously.

A small number of larvae will overwinter on the pasture and in the soil. However, the majority of larvae surviving through the winter do so within the animal - they become inhibited in the intestinal wall and then resume development the following spring. The result is that earliest-born calves are infected, develop patent infections and contribute to more larvae on the pasture. Later-born calves are thus exposed to an increased concentration of larvae on the pasture. Occasionally, outbreaks of coughing calves occur around autumn. This is probably due to an inadequate exposure to larvae over the first six months of life.

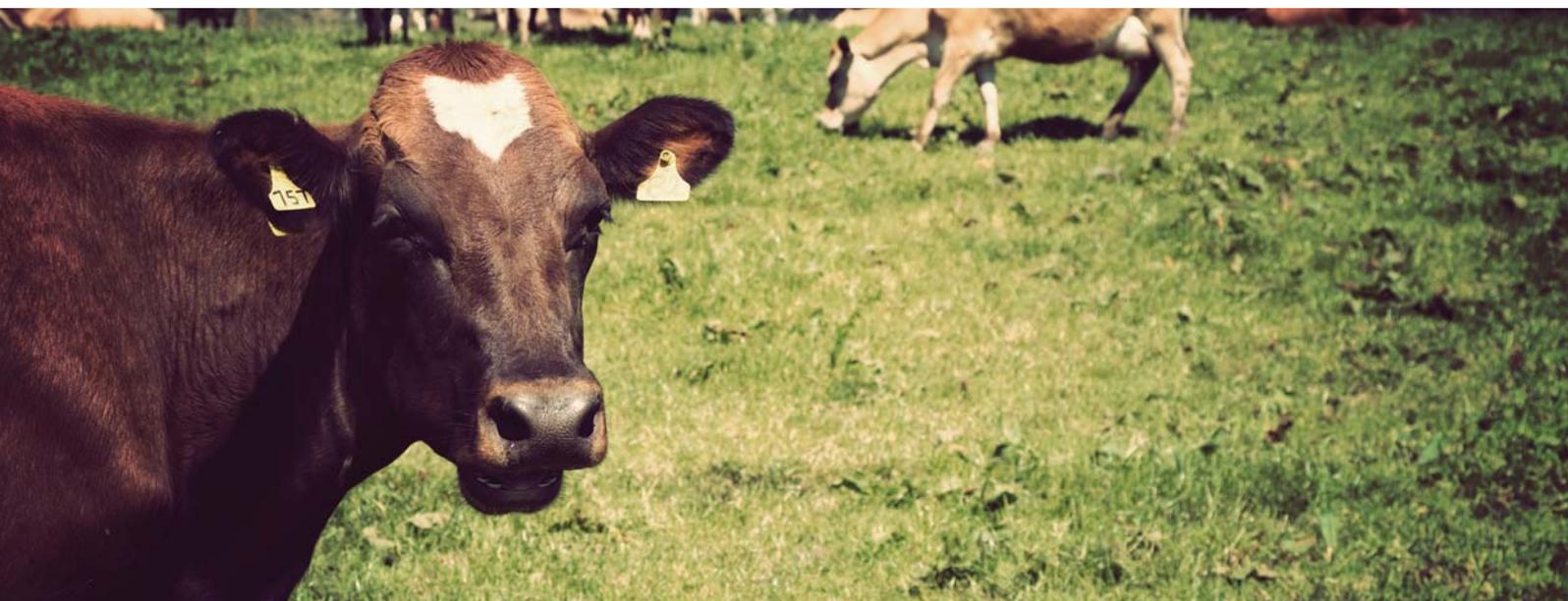
Lungworm larvae are poor migrators on pasture resulting in a heavy concentration of

larvae around the dung pat; consequently some animals may have higher intakes of infective larvae than others.

Weaner deer are most susceptible to infection because at three to five months of age they have not yet developed immunity and the environment in the autumn favours survival of the parasite. Adult deer are somewhat resistant, although disease can occur in situations of stress or poorer nutrition. Sudden death may be the first sign although weaners will sometimes lose condition, develop a roughened coat, and have a soft cough. Heavy lungworm burdens are obvious at post mortem.

Routine drenching for gastrointestinal parasites will usually remove lungworm - these worms are highly susceptible to modern drenches. However, it should be mentioned that levamisole is not effective in deer (unlike cattle) because of the rapid rate at which it is metabolised by deer.

If you would like more information on a suitable drench for lungworm in deer or cattle, please pop in to see us so that we can discuss your options.



To induce or not to induce

Paul Wiseman

Herds that induce must have identified their late calvers by scanning during a suitable

window of opportunity. A list of those cows to be induced must be with the veterinarian doing the inducing no less than 60 days before induction date. They should also be aware that 4% is the limit this season as endorsed by all key stakeholders.

- All signatories to the inducing code are committed to the target of 4% and we're all expected to comply
- All veterinarians who have clients who induce are expected to submit paperwork to DairyNZ
- Veterinarians should not make their own decisions on whether farmers can exceed the target
- Accurate pregnancy-testing data is imperative in all cases including



An easy run through winter for ewes this year? Yeah Right...

Ginny Dodunski

In late February it seemed no one was the slightest bit worried about getting through into winter in great shape. At least that's what we surmised when only a very few select sheep & beef farmers turned up to Totally Vets' annual '1st of May' woolshed meetings.

At these we cast forward and look at where things might be at the beginning of winter, what this might mean for farm performance, and actions that can be taken to maximise lambs and calves on the ground, and a good supply of feed to enable their mums to milk well and grow them out.

This year the theme of the session was that 'good seasons don't last forever', and we highlighted in particular the need for careful management of ewe flocks in the weeks leading up to mating, to preserve the potential in the well conditioned ewes out there, and highlight the value of lifting the ewes who are still light in the weeks coming into mating.

Beyond tupping there were going to be issues with pasture control, the quality of that feed and its subsequent regrowth, and carry-over animal health issues associated with a wet and growthy summer.

SO WHERE ARE WE AT NOW?

By the time you read this, most ewes in your flock are probably pregnant already or will be within the next two weeks. Hopefully you have been able to keep the mob as a whole going forward with the pick of the quality grass in amongst the rubbish that has accumulated. Once most ewes are in lamb (end of the first cycle for MA April-mated ewes, and anytime from now on for March-mated flocks), there is the opportunity to enlist their help for limited cleanup duty.

It's probably going to be better not to use ewes to completely deck out paddocks in one round, not because of the risk of pregnancy loss, but because of the negative effects later on of stripping too much body condition off

them at this point. We've measured that ewes in a 'normal' winter will tend to lose half to one body condition score (BCS) whilst on rotation. Preserving good bodyweights with a steady approach to pasture control now will mean ewes are more flexible to manage later, and more likely to lamb in acceptable body condition.

LOOKING AHEAD

Do your feed budgets. Work backwards from where you want to be at lambing and make decisions now as to what needs to happen to achieve that. Yes there are some pastures that need tidying up and to be brought back into the system with decent feed on them for lambing. If ewes are required for this job because there isn't another stock class to do it, at least draft off the lower BCS ones and make those who can safely lose more do the work.

At all times when light ewes are drafted off they should be drenched. In some classes of ewe a long-acting drench may give a better return. Talk to Totally Vets.

Go through this exercise again at scanning, and if you are not mid-pregnancy shearing, make sure you put a hand on the back of every sheep. Minimising the weight loss off your lighter ewes from now through to lambing is a very profitable exercise.

bought-in cows - veterinarians should not induce cows when this is not available

- The only exceptions for exceeding the 4% target that will be approved will be for situations outside the control of the farmer e.g. AB technician failure, a disease outbreak (e.g. salmonellosis) or drought (prior to mating)
- Other reasons such as low BCS cows, inaccurate pregnancy status (including

bought-in cows), poor repro management etc will not be accepted

- Every farm doing inductions must have an induction reduction plan
- Veterinarians should not use short-acting dexamethasone alone to try to escape the process
- Farmers who have exceeded the targets for 2010 and 2011 will be contacted by Fonterra (the other dairy companies have

yet to be contacted), to advise that they must comply with the 4% target for 2012

- Fonterra is likely to consider compliance with induction target in 2013 (whatever it will be) as a condition of supply, resulting in penalties for farmers not complying

If it is your intention to induce cows this season and you are confused, discuss the requirements with your Totally Vets vet now.

RESULTS

THE PROOF IS IN THE PREPARATION



POWERBUILT MEGA TOOL SET

OR

POWERBUILT SPANNER SET OR JACK

GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT THIS SEASON BY PREPARING WITH MERIAL ANCARE PRODUCTS AND WE'LL HELP YOU STAY ON TOP OF SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS AROUND THE FARM WITH A NEW SET OF POWERBUILT TOOLS OR 2.5 TON JACK*

*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

UPCOMING EVENTS

Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Saturday 21st April 2012

Launch from the Castlecliff boat ramp from 6am

\$15 per entry (conditions apply)

Entry fee can be charged to your current
Totally Vets account

Contact either clinic for your entry form