



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM SEPTEMBER 2014



## Free pet lamb vaccination service

Barney Askin

Last year Totally Vets offered a free vaccination service for pet lambs with the aim of preventing as many unnecessary lamb deaths as possible in the run up to pet day.

A lot of people took up our offer and, unlike the year before, feedback was that there were no untimely deaths (i.e. on the morning of pet day) as previously had occurred in my own household!

We would like to offer the same service again this year, so bring your pet lamb(s) to any one of our branches during the week of the **15th-19th September**, between the hours of **9.00am and 4.00pm**. We will be happy to vaccinate them and apply docking rings if required. No appointment required, just turn up!

## Introducing Sue Payne

Hi everyone, my name is Sue and I joined the Totally Vets team on the 21st July 2014 as the Procurement Manager. My role is primarily purchasing, sourcing products at the best possible price for the clinic and our clients.

I grew up in the Glen Oroua district on a dairy and pig farm. I was always out on the land with my parents as a child, and would often try to get out of going to school so I could stay at home and help on the farm. I attended Queen Elizabeth College, where I met my husband Terry.

We married about four years later and then Terry started working for Landcorp at Tangimoana, where we stayed for 10 years. Terry decided that dairy farming was what he wanted to do, so we moved to Dannevirke and spent the next 12 years there share milking on a winter-milk farm.

We have three children, Rick 31, Karl 28 and Teresa 25. We also have a grandson, and a granddaughter who is due on the 8th September.

After Dannevirke we decided to move to Whitemans Valley in Upper Hutt where we spent another eight years dairy farming. We



then moved into Upper Hutt for three years and brought a food distribution business.

We moved back to the Manawatu (which was always home!) and I started working for Elders Merchandise in Dannevirke as the Store Supervisor, being responsible for purchasing of products for clients. After working for Elders for three years, and travelling from Kairanga to Dannevirke every day, I decided I needed to be working closer to home!

**I am very excited to be working with the Totally Vets team and I love the friendly atmosphere about the clinic. So, if you need a price on anything, please don't hesitate to contact me.**



# Totally Vets current stock health

The last two weeks of August saw the end to the dream run of weather we have had through the autumn/early winter period. Despite that, animal health in the Manawatu appears to be in a reasonably good space.

## Sheep

Sheep scanning rates are up for most out there but feed supply in the hills seems to be tightening.

Hopefully the weather plays the game and continues to work in favour of lamb survival.

HA HA

## Mating time!

A farmer drove to a neighbours' farmhouse in his ute and knocked on the door. Little Johnny, a boy of about 9, opened the door.

"Is your Dad or your Mum home?" asked the farmer. "No, they went to town", said little Johnny.

"How about your brother, Howard, is he here?" asked the farmer. "No, he went with Mum and Dad", said little Johnny.

The farmer stood there for a few minutes, shifting from one foot to the other, and mumbling to himself.

"I know where all the tools are, if you want to borrow one, or I can give Dad a message", said little Johnny.

"Well", said the farmer uncomfortably, "I really wanted to talk to your Dad. It's about your brother Howard getting my daughter Susie pregnant".

The boy thought for a moment... "You would have to talk to Dad about that. I know he charges \$500 for the bull and \$50 for the pig, but I don't know how much he charges for Howard".



## Welcome aboard Donna

Hi, my name is Donna Aldridge and I have joined the Totally Vets team in customer support at the Feilding Clinic.

I grew up on a farm in Cheltenham, just out of Feilding and I have always enjoyed the rural life.

I have several years' experience in the customer service industry starting out in hospitality before progressing into pet store retail and then veterinary clinic reception and Vet Nursing roles.

I am married to Martin, a companion animal vet and we have two boys, Luka, 13 and Rian, nine. Martin and I did a two year locum stint in the UK before returning to the Manawatu to raise our boys. We have three spoilt cats, one pug dog, a rabbit and two horses.

Outside work I enjoy watching the boys on the football field. They have both been selected for Manawatu age group reps this year so I will get to enjoy football all year round.

I am a keen equine enthusiast and enjoy the time I spend with my horses and like to get out as much as I can, whether it be low level shows or just trekking... I am happy just to be outside pottering around!

I am really excited to be a part of the Totally Vets team and look forward to meeting you all in the months ahead.

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The increased number of twins and triplets out there bode well for good numbers at docking.

## Dairy

News of the lowered milk payout will focus attention on ensuring your animal health spend is truly returning a benefit to both your stock and your bottom line. If you have any questions on this don't hesitate to ask us, as

there is good science and cost benefit data available on the services we offer.

For us, calving so far has been reasonably quiet so presumably that translates as most people are having a pretty good run. The rain and cold has seen an increase in metabolic problems so keep focused on transition management. Dirty cows end up empty cows, so ensure there's a plan in place for dealing with them... Metrichhecking is a cheap and

effective way of identifying the culprits so make sure you get your herd checked in a timely fashion.

Keep an eye out for lame cows beginning to appear in the herd. With spring being such an intense period it is easy to let the number of cows with sore feet creep up. Take the time to observe, draft and treat lame cows early to avoid creating big issues in the weeks ahead.

# Sussing somatic cell counts

Ryan Carr

Whenever we talk about mastitis or milk quality it is not long before somatic cell counts (SCC) get mentioned. It is a term every dairy farmer will be familiar with, but what they actually are, and actually mean, is not immediately obvious, especially from the name.

The word somatic means body. Somatic cells (SCs) are the cow's own immune cells (mostly white blood cells) that have moved into the udder and milk in response to inflammation. This inflammation is almost always caused by bacterial infection i.e. mastitis. The number of SCs in milk is related directly to the level of infection so SCC are used around the world as a measure of milk quality. In fact 400,000cells/ml is the level above which the European Union has deemed milk not fit for human consumption. Milk with a lower cell count can be sold at a better price internationally and high cell count milk cannot be used for certain products. So sending high cell count milk to your milk supply company limits their ability to process and sell it.

As well as sending higher quality milk to the factory (and avoiding penalties), lowering your SCC actually increases milk production.



Controlling the mastitis which elevates SCC saves treatment costs, wasted milk, time and hassle factor and culls due to mastitis.

The two ways that you will get SCC readings on your herd are:

### 1. BULK MILK SOMATIC CELL COUNTS (BMSCC)

You will see a BMSCC on every tanker docket. BMSCC is an average of the SCC of all the cows contributing to the vat and is measured on each pick-up. BMSCC should be monitored for changes. A jump in the count usually means undetected cases of mastitis and a cell count that is trending upwards indicates a wider mastitis issue that should be investigated.

### 2. INDIVIDUAL COW SOMATIC CELL COUNTS (ICSCC)

After a herd test you will be given a SCC reading for each individual cow. Based on scientific studies we can be confident that

if a cow has a count below 150,000cells/ml she is free of a bacterial infection. If a cow has a count above 150,000cells/ml then it is likely that the cow has a bacterial infection of the udder. The infection may be clinical (visible changes in the milk or udder) or subclinical (no visible changes in the milk or udder). Cows can have subclinical infections all lactation without showing up as a clinical case and the only way you will identify a cow with a subclinical infection is on herd test or using a RMT paddle. Cows with subclinical infections elevate your BMSCC and can infect other cows in the herd during milking. Herd test data should be used to identify and cull cows with repeatedly high SCC to improve milk quality.

**If you need any help with mastitis or interpreting a confusing change in SCC then don't hesitate to call the Totally Vets Team and have a chat to your vet!**



# Slow boat to China

Mark Eames

Last year over 36,000 cattle were exported live from New Zealand. Almost all of these headed to China to stock dairy farms. This number is expected to increase this year, and for the next few years it seems that the demand for our dairy stock will increase further.

In June I got to experience first-hand the logistics of shipping cattle from NZ to China. Totally Vets was commissioned to provide a veterinarian to accompany a shipment of nearly 2000 rising one year old dairy heifers and I was the lucky one to get the nod.

I boarded the MV Falconia, a 40 year old, purpose-built, cattle ship in Napier. Also on

board for the 23 day journey were 16 Filipino officers and crew, an Aussie stockman, 1781 Friesian and 200 Jersey heifers. We set out into the rough seas of Hawkes Bay in the tail end of a wintry blast, with three metre swells tossing the 100 metre ship around like a cork. I was a bit green around the gills that first day and needed a few breaks from the cattle decks to quell the nausea. Thankfully it only took a day to get my sea-legs and the ocean gradually calmed for the rest of the trip!

We sailed close to New Caledonia, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, but not quite close enough to see land. The sight of another ship became an exciting highlight of my day!

The cattle were housed in pens of 15-25 and the feeding, watering and washing down was done manually. The heifers ate through about 10tonnes of pellets and 1.5tonnes of chaff per day which all had to be carried to their troughs in 25kg sacks by the crew. Seawater was desalinated for the cattle to drink, but not fast enough to keep up with the 50,000L/day demand, so stored fresh water was needed as well.

The stockman and I walked the four cattle decks twice daily, checking the stock for any signs of ill health and making sure the feed, water, ventilation and cleanliness were adequately addressed. My job was made easy by the awesome crew and their great work ethic. I never heard a complaint or argument from any of them and they never showed any ill-will toward the cattle. It was fascinating hearing about some of their other cargo that they had shipped around the world, such as water buffalo from Italy to Phillipines and stags to Gadaffi in Libya!

We arrived in Rizhao (a small Chinese city of just 2.8million people!) where the cattle were transferred to trucks for a 20 minute drive to a quarantine facility where they would spend 45 days. It was with a mix of relief and sadness that I bid farewell to both the heifers and the crew. An amazing voyage that I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to experience!

# Gossip

Congratulations to the “**Totally Wrecked**”

Totally Vets Taumarunui crew, plus some willing partners and a few game clients, who competed in the annual 6km Mud Run (Rotorua Tough Guy/Gal Challenge) last month. The earliest team members home did the course in under an hour, with some massive efforts put in! Vet Nurse **Sandra** thought she'd be cunning and compete in touch rugby boots with no socks (since they weigh you down once your feet get wet!) however the outcome wasn't too successful, as she got colossal blisters and ended up completing the course in bare feet! Despite perhaps feeling “totally

wrecked” by the end of it, the team had a blast... having all stayed in the same hotel there was plenty of fun had off-course as well!

We welcome back **Lucy** to the field having fully re-cooperated after her accident. It's fantastic to have her experience and smiling face back amongst the equine team at Awapuni.

There are a number of new staff at our Feilding branch. The reception team welcomes **Vanessa Whale** who has moved from Taihape where she managed the Plunket Centre. Vanessa brings a lot of customer service experience having co-ordinated labs in Napier, Hawkes Bay and Auckland. The small animal

hospital welcomes **Jessica Holly** aboard as our new vet nurse. Meanwhile, in the grooming salon, we are lucky to have **Nicole Chapman** join us as a qualified and experienced dog groomer.

Several staff headed off on exciting overseas trips. From reception, **Carley Bennett** and her husband have headed off on a five month European adventure, travelling around in a campervan. Small animal vet **Sally Browning** has set off to France, where she will be based in Normandy as a keen spectator at the World Equestrian Games. **Catherine Toyne**, from the call centre team, also heads off to France, then to Spain and Monaco to wine and dine with the rich and famous.



# Bovine Virus Diarrhoea

Cormac Chalmers

Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) is a widespread virus that affects the reproductive, immune, and gastrointestinal systems of cattle. Infection of a naïve animal will result in a transient infection with short term immunosuppression and diarrhoea. When a pregnant animal is infected, the virus can cross the placenta and infect the embryo/foetus.

What effect this has on the cow and unborn calf depends on the stage of pregnancy, but include; early embryonic deaths causing long return-to-service intervals; low in-calf rates; abortions; stillbirths; birth of “dummy calves” and the birth of persistently infected (PI) calves that are carriers of BVD virus. PI calves are generally described as being unthrifty, stunted, hairy, and poor doers, but in many cases they are in fact indistinguishable from uninfected calves and can survive long enough to reproduce.

## THE RISKS

The main routes through which a PI might gain access to your herd is:

- Bulls
- Bought-in cows and “Trojans” (PI foetus inside an immune cow)
- Neighbours’ stock
- R1’s returning from grazing in contact

with cows, especially heifers, during the first four months of pregnancy

- Indirect contact through people or equipment

## CONTROL

PIs are the main source of infection and the main mechanism for maintaining infection within a herd. The goal of BVD control is to remove any PIs currently in the herd and to prevent PIs entering the herd, which happens most often through the birth of PI calves.

There are three main actions of control:

### 1. Test for the virus and cull

Defining the BVD status of your farm can be done by performing a bulk milk BVD antibody ELISA (to determine the herds exposure) or a bulk milk BVD antigen PCR (which tells us whether there is an infected animal currently in the milking herd). For non-lactating animals, the herd’s exposure can be assessed with a pooled serum BVD antibody test or animals can be individually tested using BVD PCR.

### 2. Change management to reduce the risk of exposure

The key areas of biosecurity on which to concentrate for BVD are:

- Cattle coming on to the property, including their foetuses, and bulls
- Cattle going off the property and returning pregnant at a later date
- Contact with neighbours’ cattle

### 3. Vaccinate

Vaccination is considered once other control and biosecurity measures have been examined. Whole herd vaccination

is most often considered when the herd’s exposure has been tested and found to be high. It is a highly effective way of preventing losses due to BVD and is used to reduce and eventually eliminate infection over time by minimising the number of PI calves produced. If whole herd vaccination is not an option, then it is best to vaccinate any cattle that will go off the farm during the early stages of pregnancy. ALL bulls must be BVD tested and vaccinated.

## MONITORING

The purpose of monitoring is to make sure that the control procedures put in place are improving the BVD status of the farm and to detect as quickly as possible any new introduction of the virus.

The two main ways to monitor are:

- Bulk milk antigen and antibody tests, or pooled serum BVD antibody from mixed-age cows
- Screening keeper calves for virus using skin or serum samples. These tests are done at 35 days of age

## SUMMARY

BVD is a complex disease syndrome that is yet to be fully understood. However vast amounts of research have made detection and control a practical and affordable reality. There are clear economic and animal health gains to be made, particularly in the dairy sector, by minimising the impact that BVD may be having on your animals.

**Call your Totally Vets veterinarian today to arrange a BVD risk assessment for your farm!**

# Lambs and docking time

Juan Klue

Docking time will likely be upon you before you know it and, when it comes to docking and castration/scrotum shortening, a few minimum standards apply that require some preparation.

No painful procedure(s) should be performed on animals under 12 hours old. Lambs should be **docked** within six weeks of birth with tails left long enough to cover the vulva in females and a similar length in males. Searing irons or conventional rubber rings are recommended, instead of cutting techniques or high tension bands, and pain relief must be used in animals over six months old.

When **castrating**, ensure use of the correct size of rubber ring. The ring should be placed above the testes and below the teats. Anaesthetic must be used on any aged animal if using a high tension band. Generally use of rubber rings is best as it avoids the need for surgical castration later on. When scrotum shortening (cryptorchid) place the ring below the testes and push the testes up into the



cavity. Castration earlier than six weeks of age will likely be impractical for the commercial farmer, where docking and castration is generally done at the same time, but it may be achievable for the small block holder.

To minimise the risk of infection, the equipment and area used, as well as the lamb and the operator's hands, should be clean and dry. You can clean equipment with disinfectant. Try to avoid docking/castrating in wet weather as this increases the risk of infection. Also the use of temporary yards, which can be moved from paddock to paddock, is wise as it helps prevent build-up of contamination in the operating area.

When it comes to **vaccinating**, best practice is to give lambs born from previously unvaccinated ewes one injection of Lamb Vaccine at docking (four to six weeks old) then either one injection of Multine<sup>®</sup>5in1, Covexin<sup>®</sup>10 or Ultravac<sup>™</sup>5in1 vaccine four weeks later (can coincide with weaning). All lambs kept beyond this time should receive a second injection four weeks later (can

coincide with drenching). The 5in1 products protect against the clostridal diseases pulpy kidney, blackleg, black disease, malignant oedema and tetanus. The Covexin<sup>®</sup>10 vaccine protects against a further five clostridal diseases including a couple associated with sudden death syndrome. Lamb Vaccine contains tetanus antitoxin which gives the lamb immediate protection against tetanus at docking and it contains a sensitiser dose for pulpy kidney.

For lambs born from previously vaccinated ewes, two injections of Multine<sup>®</sup>5in1, Covexin<sup>®</sup>10 or Ultravac<sup>™</sup>5in1 at 12 and 16 weeks old are required. Both regimes will give lambs active protection for 12 months.

Finally, the virus that causes scabby mouth may be present on your farm. This can be controlled by scratching Scabine<sup>®</sup> vaccine on the inside of the thigh at docking. Be careful not to self inject as it is a live strain and can transmit disease to humans.

Happy docking!



## Correct Vaccination Technique

Joao Dib

It is important to have good vaccination technique and practices in order to minimise carcass damage and risk of infection. Some tips to help ensure this are:

- Use clean and sterile needles. If you HAVE to reuse them then boil in water for 10 minutes or immerse in a container of meths prior to use.
- Plastic vaccination guns can be suitably cleaned by immersing in a solution of 20mls of household bleach into 500mls of water. Flush with cold, previously boiled, water before use.
- Needles need to be sharp and replaced regularly, every 20 to 30 animals.
- For cattle use 15mm long, 16 gauge needles. For sheep use 15 mm long, 18 gauge needles.
- The majority of vaccinations require injection UNDER the SKIN only. Tent the skin and inject under the tent BUT aim the needle parallel to the body NOT at right angle to it.
- Avoid vaccinating during wet weather.
- Avoid choosing a heavily contaminated (such as with faeces or mud) vaccination site.

# Inductions no longer...

Colin Wakelin

On July 8th 2014 the NZ Veterinary Council published new rules regarding the induction of dairy cows to calve. **As of 2015 routine inductions will no longer be permitted, though specific one-off requests for dispensation can be made.**

The procedure for dispensation requires that the request must be submitted through your veterinarian to your dairy company, which will make the final decision on giving permission or not.

This means that it's time to start thinking ahead NOW about mating plans in preparation for the forthcoming mating season. Some of the things to consider are:

- **REDUCED MATING PERIOD**

Shortening your mating period by pulling bulls out earlier may leave you with a higher 'empty rate' at pregnancy testing, but will bring late-calving cows into line. There are ways to manage a higher empty rate, such as selling empty cows after pregnancy testing and buying in pregnant replacements, or carrying more replacement heifers.

- **ACCURATE OESTRUS DETECTION**

Tail painting your herd 35 days before mating and recording heats, can give you a good idea of the anoestrous cows in your herd before mating starts. This allows development of a plan to deal with them early and get maximum benefit from the intervention.

- **EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF NON-CYCLERS**

Linked with the point above, one way to tighten calving pattern, and get more days in-milk in the following season, is to treat non-cyclers with a controlled internal drug release (CIDR) programme. Treating these cows early provides the best return on investment compared to waiting for them to start cycling on their own, often many weeks later. Research in the Waikato has highlighted the value of anoestrus treatment at the planned start of mating (PSM). CIDR programmes started 10 days prior to PSM advances conception date (and subsequent calving date) by 10-16 days. This means cows calve earlier and the extra days in-milk give you a great return on investment.

- **MATING HEIFERS EARLIER THAN THE MAIN HERD**

Having heifers calving earlier gives them more time to recover and get in calf as 3 year olds.

- **METRICHECKING THE HERD**

Metrichecking identifies cows with chronic metritis and gives time for curative treatment before the PSM.

- **PREGNANCY TESTING EARLY**

Pregnancy testing at six weeks after the end of AI allows for aging of pregnancies and clear identification of cows holding to AI. This information enables a staged dry-off at the end of lactation, helps with feed budgeting decisions and allows identification of late-calving cows for potential culling.

- **BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS)**

BCS at calving is an indicator of the probable success of mating. Cows at less than BCS 5 at calving have six week in-calf rates lower than if they had calved in the optimal BCS range of 5.0-5.5.

Achieving herd targets (not more than 15% of cows <BCS 5.0 or >5.5 at calving with the average BCS loss for herd after calving not more than 1.0; not more than 15% of cows <BCS 4.0 at mating with cows maintaining or gaining BCS from mating onwards) means you're on track for a great mating!

Every farm is different but basic principles are the same, they key one being PLANNING. The above practices (but not limited to) may be potentially helpful in compressing your calving span. Talk with your Totally Vets veterinarian today to make a plan for mating!

## Kopane School Annual Calf Rearing Scheme

Brenden and Janine Print

Every year, for the past 12 years, Kopane School run an annual calf rearing scheme and this season we are raising 16 calves. The money gained goes towards

purchasing items that are not covered by our operating grant. This year it will help purchase tablets/notebooks for the classrooms.

With help from parents and ex-parents of the school, we raise as many calves as we can. All calves are usually very well grown as they become family pets and get a bit spoilt! In the 1st week of December they will head to the Feilding sale yards where hopefully they will gain a great price... So, with the help and support of our school families, friends and local businesses, our children can benefit from items which are normally only on their wish list!



**We get great support from many businesses from the rural sector, and once again Totally Vets has helped out by sponsoring milk powder. If any other individual or business is keen to support us please contact Kopane School on 06 324 8717, we'd love to hear from you!**

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