



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

NOVEMBER 2014



## Calendar Competition Results

A huge thank you goes to the children who submitted photos for our Totally Vets Calendar Competition. The 2015 calendar is our best yet!

First prize of a camera and \$200 for his school went to **Logan Paddison** from Russell Street School, Palmerston North, for his entry "Inquisitive Cows".

Second prize of \$100, plus \$200 for her school, was awarded to **Ruby Waho** from St Patrick's School, Taumarunui, with her entry "Best friends".

**Lauren Read** from Oroua Downs School came third with "Happy brown babies sleeping by the hay". Lauren won \$50 plus \$150 for her school.

## Early pregnancy testing... Getting the most 'bang for your buck!'

Greg Smith

Achieving a successful mating relies as much on the decisions made before the start of mating as the important activities of heat detection and bull management during mating. Body condition, feed budgeting, and even heifer rearing are as important and, with the exception of heifer rearing, these are directly influenced by the decisions made at the end of the previous lactation.

Drying-off decisions should therefore be based around calving date and body condition to make the most of the feed that is available without compromising body condition before calving. The last two seasons have highlighted this need even further, with drought conditions putting pressure on resources.

Early pregnancy testing will provide the most accurate calving dates with the greatest consistency. Pregnancies are best aged between six to twelve weeks after the conception date, so testing the herd six weeks after the end of artificial insemination (AI) allows the early calving cows to be identified with the greatest accuracy. With this information you will have the ability to:

- Dry-off early calving cows early
- Milk later calving cows longer
- Know which cows to send away for grazing and for how long
- Better allocate cows to the springer mob next calving
- Cull empty cows early if feed becomes short

The cows not pregnant at the early test are re-checked six to seven weeks after the end of the bull mating period to identify bull mated and empty cows.

In addition, early pregnancy testing provides an accurate calculation of the six week in-calf rate of the herd. More cows in-calf early means more days in milk, so the rate at which cows become pregnant is as important as the final empty rate for profitability. An accurate six week in-calf rate allows the Fertility Focus Report (FFR) to provide the best analysis of your herd's reproductive performance which in turn can be used to highlight the areas of greatest need for improvement.

**If you are not currently using early pregnancy testing, contact your vet to discuss the benefits and timing for your herd.**



# Totally Vets current stock health

## Dairy

Check your early mating submission rate as you go into the second round of mating. To achieve a high six week in-calf rate (target 78%), almost the entire herd (90%+) should have been mated in the first three weeks of mating. Getting this right pays dividends in days in-milk next season!

Continue with magnesium supplementation, as with the change in grass composition associated with the fast spring growth, we are still seeing a number of cows with metabolic issues.

Don't forget about your young stock now they are, or soon will be, turned out to pasture. Feed for growth and monitor weight gain.

## HA HA

### How do you decide who to marry?

You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming. (Alan, aged 10)

### How can a stranger tell if two people are married?

You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. (Derrick, age 8)

### Is it better to be single or married?

It's better for girls to be single than for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them. (Anita, age 9 - bless you child)

### How would the world be different if people didn't get married?

There sure would be a lot of kids to explain, wouldn't there? (Kelvin, age 8)

And the #1 favourite is

### How would you make a marriage work?

Tell your wife that she looks pretty even if she looks like a truck. (Ricky, age 10)

## Bovine Virus Diarrhoea... what is the cost?

Hamish Pike

It has been estimated that 15% of herds in New Zealand have active Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) infection. BVD can have major economic impacts, mainly due to reduced milk yield and the culling of unproductive stock. Eliminating BVD from your herd and protecting your herd from re-introduction through vaccination makes strong economic sense.

In dairy herds with an active BVD infection:

- on average cows will take 2.4 days longer to get in calf
- on average cows will produce 0.074kgMS less per day
- 2.03% cows will abort and be culled (and lose their calf)
- 25% will die before they are two years of age if they are persistently infected (PI)
- 69% of PI cattle which survive over two years of age will be culled (on average 1.33% of cattle over two years of age are PI's in an actively infected herd)

Based on a \$5.00/kgMS pay out and an average production of 1.41kgMS/cow/day (260 days), this is an **approximate annual cost** of:

- **\$57,600 per 400 cows per year or \$144 per cow per year** (excluding grazing costs)

The cost of eradicating active BVD infection:

- \$7,000 per 400 cows (includes testing calves, yearlings and bulls)

The cost of vaccinating your whole herd to protect from re-infection (first year of vaccination):

- \$9,600 per 400 cows (includes vaccination of calves at four months of age, yearlings and bulls)

The cost of vaccinating your whole herd annually:

- \$4,800 per 400 cows (includes vaccination of calves at four months of age, yearlings and bulls)

Therefore, the net benefit from eradication of BVD and annual vaccination is:

- **\$516,000 per 400 cows over 10 years or \$129 per cow per year**

Based on Totally Vets 2014 vaccine prices and calculated using information from Heuer C, Healy A, Zerbini C. Economic effect of exposure to bovine viral diarrhoea on dairy herds in New Zealand. *Journal of Science*. 90, 5428-38, 2007.

**Testing of bulk milk for BVD is the most simple and cost effective start point for assessing BVD status on your farm. If you think BVD is an issue for you, or would like more information, contact the team at Totally Vets today!**

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Cases of coccidiosis in weaner calves are common this time of the year, so continue to use a calf meal with an added coccidiostat for one to two months after weaning. Take action and investigate quickly if young stock are not thriving as expected.

## Sheep and Beef

Be proactive with your bloat prevention rather than having to absorb the cost of

dead animals. It has already been prevalent this season, in all classes of cattle. A clover dominant pasture is the classic 'culprit' but bloat also occurs on recently sown short rotation ryegrass swards with low clover content.

Deaths from clostridial disease can be hard to distinguish from bloat and occur more commonly when cattle are growing well on high-quality feed, but it is timely to remind

that finishing cattle should be 5-in-1 or 10-in-1 vaccinated.

Lambing ewe hoggets should be weaned once lambs are 10 weeks old to allow mum time to grow out to a decent two tooth. Plan now for a place to put these lambs as they require very good feed with low parasite challenge, and be sure that you have an on-going parasite management programme in place!

# Lameness Alert

Joao Dib

A lame cow is a cow that is in pain, be it mild to moderate or severe. Pain will contribute to the inhibition of cycling activity, so now is an important time to monitor and take prompt action to care for any cows with sore feet. Early treatment will improve the chance of your animal resuming cycling and get in-calf before the end of mating.

Some of the key points to remember, and to ensure everyone on the farm is aware of, include:

- Move cows slowly. The speed of movement is controlled by the dominant cows, often in the middle of the herd. Pushing hard at the back will not get you to the shed any faster.
- A cow considers carefully where her front feet are placed - at the safest spot so as to avoid damage or bruising. The back foot lands where the front foot departed. The faster you push the more often the back cows will misplace the back foot, causing lameness.
- Deal with problem areas in your raceway promptly. The goal is to improve flow and avoid bunching. If you need advice and would like support in this area don't hesitate to contact your vet.

- Do not overuse the backing gate. Within reason, allow cows space to come into the shed in their own time in their own order.

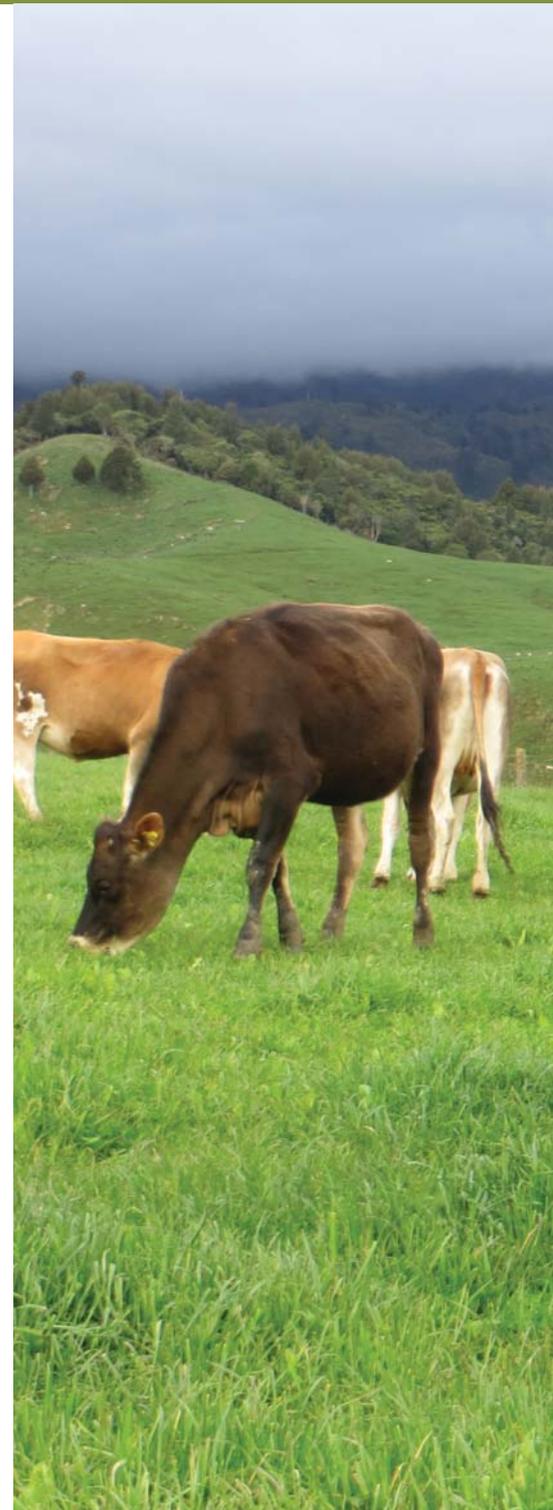
On a daily basis:

### IDENTIFY LAME COWS EARLY BY:

- Watching them as they walk - they will lower the head when the affected REAR foot is put down and lift the head when the affected FRONT foot is put down.
- Watching their backs - a flat back is good, but ANY "curve" may be a sign of lameness.

### TAKE ACTION:

- Immediately draft any lame cow(s) and place in the lame mob. Lame cows must not walk back to the grazing paddock but must be placed in the closest available paddock to the shed.
- As soon as possible check the lame feet and treat the problem. If you are unable to do so, get someone that can or call the vet.
- Do not wait for a bunch of lame cows to accumulate before calling the vet or getting cows in. While a cow is lame other diseases can develop due to stress. Weight loss, due to decreased mobility and grazing, can also lead to a subsequent drop in milk production.
- As a GENERAL RULE - do not wait more than two days to get a mild to moderately lame cow treated properly. If severely lame, she needs urgent attention.





# Get the most out of your bull team

## PART TWO

Barry Askin

Following on from last month's article there are several things that can go wrong despite having set yourself up with a great team of bulls.

**LAMENESS** during the mating period can seriously compromise fertility. A bull that is foot sore will be reluctant to seek out cycling cows, be reluctant to mount them, and may even have reduced sperm quality as a result of an infection such as footrot. The flip side of this is that a dominant lame bull, while he may be incapable of serving cows, may be very

capable of preventing other subordinate, but fertile, bulls from doing the job. Consequently **lame bulls should be removed from the herd immediately.**

Bulls with less severe lameness, such as following an episode of bruising, could be used again after a week of rest. More serious conditions such as footrot could send the bull out for the rest of the season. It is worth getting these lame bulls assessed, particularly if it is early in the season or if bull numbers are tight.

The best way to avoid bulls becoming lame is to train them to stay in the paddock, as most lameness incidents will occur on races and in the yard. It also reduces the distances they are walking. This is often put in the "too hard basket". A few days of effort at the beginning of mating can make this very achievable. Bulls can be made highly visible with fluro paint or have reflective strips glued to them to help see them in the dark. An extra staff member may be required for the first few days. If bulls are to be moved along with the cows then ensure

they are rotated out for a rest every two to three days.

If a lame bull that is removed is part of a team, then it is important that it is NOT replaced with another. It takes a while for the hierarchy of the group to be established and the introduction of a new bull can cause several days of scrapping that can be detrimental to fertility.

Apart from lameness, **INJURY** is the most likely reason that a bull will stop working during the mating period. Probably the two most common injuries seen are to the penis or back. A bull with a broken penis is totally unfit for purpose and has to be removed. Emergency slaughter of these animals may even be required as sometimes they cannot urinate. A bull with a damaged back may sit on his own or alternatively may spend his time preventing other bulls from working. It pays to keep an eye on what is happening out there in the paddock.

Happy Mating!

## GOSSIP

# Getting in the spirit for Rural Day

Friday 13th October took on a different feel at Totally Vets this year with it being Feilding's annual **Rural Day**. In the spirit of the day there were cow girl hats, shirts and boots, and

even a sheep costume was worn for the day, which was a source of great entertainment and amusement for many! Well done and many thanks to **Aunty Di, Reuben** and **Sue** for organising and running the sausage sizzle.

The **Totally Vets women's gumboot relay team**, came second in the women's relay and sixth place overall. Even though the team didn't take the number one place, everyone had heaps of fun although **Carla** found out that running dressed in sheep's clothing is not that easy and that you get rather warm!

September saw our second very successful free **Pet Lamb Vaccination campaign**. The Customer Service Team and clinic vets had a busy week with a lot of locals coming in to get their pet lambs vaccinated and docked. Good luck to all for the pet days in the weeks ahead.

**Catherine** has returned home after spending a fun few weeks in Europe. Her favourite place was Spain, a "most colourful, vibrant, full of life place with very friendly people". **Sally** has also returned from abroad where she spent most of her time in the north of France at the

# Looking after your young stock

Craig Dickson

Replacement heifer calves are the most valuable class of stock you own. They carry the best genetics and form the basis of your future production and, hence, income stream. Too often they are treated as poor cousins to lactating cows.

These animals have cost a lot of money (estimated at around \$1300 per heifer) to get them to the milking herd. It would seem a pity to get them there in poor condition, have a very ordinary lactation, and then fall out of the system because they failed to get pregnant. It is estimated 33% of heifers are lost between rearing and the end of their first lactation. This is a huge waste.

Once in the herd, failure to cycle becomes the major problem as these new entrants struggle to settle into the herd hierarchy and successfully compete for the available feed. The problem is worse when they are below target weight to start with and actually have an increased feed demand just to support the extra growth required. By comparison, well-grown heifers will have a reproductive performance equal to that of mature cows.



Getting young stock to where they need to be means knowing where they are at different stages:

### Wean at appropriate weight (kg)

Mature Liveweight	400	450	500	550
Weaning (three months)	70	80	90	100

### Monitor liveweights at least every three months (kg)

Mature Liveweight	400	450	500	550
6 months	120	135	150	165
9 months	160	180	200	220
12 months	200	225	250	275
15 months	240	270	300	330

In addition to monitoring of weights:

- Make sure calves are **fed abundant high quality pasture** to achieve liveweight targets. If unable to do this, feed good quality supplement.

- Ensure **trace element status** is ok.
- Ensure that appropriate **disease control** including clostridial/leptospirosis **vaccinations** are in place.
- Consider **facial eczema** threat and whether zinc supplementation is needed.
- Ensure there is an efficient **parasite control** programme.

Finally, just a bit more on the parasite issue because it's critical in these young animals. This class of stock should be being drenched orally with, at minimum, a double combination product. With the occasional toxicity issue we have seen using products containing abamectin, it is probably safer to use these once the animal is over 120kg. Do NOT drench calves at the calfeteria, either by mixing with the milk, or through a drench gun. Also, keep a close eye on the drench gun and ensure it is administering the appropriate dose.

**Be sure to talk to your vet about specific product options that are most appropriate for your situation.**

World Equestrian Games. She too, thoroughly enjoyed herself!

It was great to see **Allie**, who popped in to say hello during her holiday break back here in NZ. Her smiling face was a welcome sight and we look forward to her permanent return next year.

Last month saw **Hamish** have his much awaited operation on his knee. He is now in recovery mode and is looking forward to getting back out and about on farm!



The Feilding reception cowgirls



## Before and after de velveting

Juan Klue

There are numerous factors, both before and after de velveting, that, if considered, will help to ensure the process runs as smoothly as possible.

### STAG FEED REQUIREMENTS

During and after the rut a stag can lose a considerable amount of weight, which if not regained before velvet begins to grow, can affect the velvet yield. Post rut nutrition

therefore can influence velvet weight. Ideally red stags should have been eating greater than 1.8% of their body weight in kgDM over the winter which is continued through the spring. That is about 3.5 to 4kgDM of high quality feed per day. Wapiti stags require much higher levels of feeding (about 30 to 40% more feed) over the winter and spring. This requirement will increase over the summer as feed quality decreases.

### DRAFTING

As stags drop their buttons they should be drafted into mobs on a weekly basis. This eliminates the need to draft at de velveting and helps decrease the risk of damaging velvet.

### EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Equipment should be checked to ensure it is in working order. Facilities should be checked to ensure gates and crushes are functioning, sharp objects are removed, floors scraped clean of mud/dust, ventilation and light are adequate, and outside yards have minimal mud and exposed rocks.

### TIMING and BOOKING IN

Stags exposed to temperatures greater than 22°C during de velveting may suffer from heat stress, so please book an appointment a few days ahead of time to ensure we can get a vet to you early in the morning, especially if the weather is warm. An initial estimate of stag numbers can then be confirmed or altered, on the day before de velveting. This will help us in our planning.

### YARDING

Mob size should be relative to facility size as most stress and potential for damage/injury occurs through overcrowding in the yards, particularly at first yarding. Stags should be left alone to settle from 10 minutes to two hours depending on need. All stags that are not to be de velveted should be separated out and released. However, if there is only one stag to de velvet, then try and leave a companion.

### POST-VELVETING ENVIRONMENT

Following velvet removal, and reversal from the sedative, stags should be released to a nearby paddock with good water supply and a cool shady area for the observation/recovery period.

### POST-VELVETING MONITORING

Some stags can get post sedation reactions, which includes death. These tend to recur on the same properties so if these have occurred in the past, ensure you inform the vet so the risk can be evaluated.

Check the stags within one hour after de velveting and at regular intervals for 48 hours after. Look out for stags lying on their sides, excessive bleeding (spurting for more than 30 minutes after tourniquet removal), prolonged lack of alertness, continued wide-based stance or unsteady gait, laboured breathing and bloat. If your observations cannot be quickly rectified, for example by applying a tourniquet or getting the stag to his feet, call us immediately.

## Photo-sensitivity in livestock

Helen Mather

Photosensitivity in livestock, commonly referred to as 'eczema', is sunlight induced swelling, reddening, scabbing and/or peeling of white or un-pigmented areas of skin. This

is a recognised condition in New Zealand which causes major financial loss for farmers through decreases in livestock growth, productivity, and even death.

Most farmers, especially those in the North Island, are familiar with **facial eczema**, which is caused by toxic fungal spores, occurs during warm, wet conditions, and is usually seen in late summer and autumn. There are a number of less common and sporadic types of eczema, however, including **Spring eczema** (Aug-Dec), **Brassica** (turnip/rape scald) and **St John's**

**Wort photosensitivity**. Additionally, many of the photosensitivities are misdiagnosed or not reported at all. This makes it difficult to gain insight into the geographical spread and prevalence of the affliction, and subsequently the likely cause.

Clinical signs of photosensitivity include:

- Twitching, flicking of ears and tail
- Irritability, stomping and kicking at self
- Swelling around the eyes, ears, udder, and feet
- Hair loss, reddening, thickening, scabbing and peeling of affected skin

# Theileria in the Manawatu

Hamish Pike

*Theileria orientalis* (the Ikeda strain) was first diagnosed in the Manawatu in 2013. We have now had numerous properties in the Manawatu becoming infected for the first time this year. The impact seen on individual farms has been variable, from a few sick cows to multiple deaths.

Theileria is a blood parasite that is spread by the cattle tick. It appears on a property either via infected ticks on cattle, or via infected cattle which then infect the local tick population. The parasite locates within the red blood cells, and it is the destruction of these cells that causes symptoms within cattle.

Most animals will show no obvious signs of disease however some within a herd will suffer severe anaemia which, if left untreated, could lead to death. Expected clinical signs which include lethargy, poor appetite, pale udders (usually observable at milking), pale mucous membranes of the gums and vulva, are all signs associated with anaemia.

Stresses around calving time, or where animals have concurrent disease or deficiency (such as Bovine Virus Diarrhoea, copper and/or selenium deficiency) can trigger disease

outbreaks. **Young calves may be particularly at risk this time of year due to the stress of weaning.**

The tick has a three host life cycle. Stage one, the nymph, crawls to the top of the pasture, hops onto a cow in the spring, feeds for four to five days and then falls off. It then grows into an adult, stage two, which jumps onto a cow for five to seven days, any time from November to January, feeds and again falls off, with the females now laying thousands of eggs in the ground. Stage three is when these eggs develop into larvae which also hop on to cattle over the summer for a feed.

Theileria is spread to cattle when the ticks are feeding, via their saliva. It can also develop within the tick itself, and it is a required host for the life cycle, BUT it does not pass into the tick eggs so subsequent generations contract Theileria from feeding on an infected cow. An individual cow can harbour the infection for over eight months.

Therefore control of ticks is strongly advised, particularly if moving cattle from one property to another, and especially if there is a history of ticks or the disease. In this case it is recommended for cattle to be treated with Bayticol® pour-on before (preferably FIVE days prior) leaving the property. Cattle already on the property should be checked for ticks as treatment may also be useful to reduce the tick numbers and severity of disease.

## OTHER METHODS FOR CONTROL INCLUDE

- Dessication of larvae with low pasture cover.

- High stocking rate to eat ticks.
- Three day grazing of problem paddocks, remove animals (plus ticks) and treat. Repeat to obtain a "clean" paddock.

## SUMMARY OF CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you have stock grazing away where there is a known tick burden, treat them with Bayticol®.
- Quarantine treat bought-on animals with Bayticol® if from a tick area or infected property.
- If you have an on-going Theileria problem, treat with Bayticol® now and again pre-Christmas.
- Use new needles between mobs if injecting cattle.
- Monitor stock, particularly calves, for signs of anaemia.
- Affected animals need minimal stress. Animals with moderate signs are best separated and milked once a day. More severely affected cows will need to be dried-off and given top quality and amounts of feed. Movement or yarding of these animals should be minimised.
- Check newly introduced animals regularly for any signs of ticks and/or disease.

**Totally Vets is facilitating a Theileria on-farm discussion group on Wednesday 12th November. Contact Gaye on 06 324 0804, or by email at [gaye.stein@totallyvets.co.nz](mailto:gaye.stein@totallyvets.co.nz), for more information and to register.**

- In dairy cows, a transient diarrhoea and a sudden drop in milk production one to two weeks prior to seeing any other signs

Diagnosis is primarily based on clinical signs, but a blood sample or liver biopsy can also be taken to assess liver function.

Not knowing the cause makes this affliction difficult to treat and raises problems with the development of early prevention, treatment and/or curative methods. Currently, affected animals can only be treated with supportive therapy including the provision of darkened housing or shelter, treatment with anti-inflammatory and antihistamine drugs, and



Rape scald, Clinton, South Island.

zinc creams or other sunblocking ointments on raw skin.

**Mark Collett, a specialist Veterinary Pathologist at Massey University, is working on identifying what causes Spring eczema. In order to investigate this,**



Brassica photosensitivity, Dannevirke, North Island.

**he needs to be able to collect samples from affected animals, so we are really interested in hearing of acute, severe cases, especially those involving young animals. If you have a suspect case please contact your Totally Vets veterinarian!**

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CONTACT: Roy Fergus 027 5243636 Taumarunui | Reuben Harland 027 5224051 Feilding/Palmerston North

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