



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

JUNE 2016



Congratulations to Bruce Hockley for taking out the 2016 Premier Breeding Services Heaviest Snapper trophy



Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Carla Sheridan

Saturday 16th April 2016 saw a hugely successful turnout of 113 fishermen and women gather on some 30 boats for the annual Totally Vets Fishing Competition.

A couple of salty old sea dogs I know had been raving about how good the fishing had been off Whanganui throughout the summer and the weather forecasts leading up to the day were promising, however the swell map the day before was telling us a very different story! Saturday morning revealed a roly-polly, but bearable, sea so boats were launched and hopes were high that the big ones would be biting.

With over \$5000 in prizes kindly donated by our sponsors we were able to add two new categories of Junior Angler and Lady Angler. A full list of our most generous sponsors can be found on the Totally Vets website www.totallyvets.co.nz – please support them as they have done us.

Care with copper

Greg Smith

With the season the way it has been copper (Cu) levels are more likely to be limiting this season.

Firstly the effects of facial eczema (FE) have, and still are, being felt around the district. The challenge has been high and started early this year. This has meant that higher than normal levels of zinc (Zn) will likely have been used before the risk finally dissipates, which is still not obvious yet. The unintended consequence of Zn supplementation is that it interferes with Cu absorption so treated animals will have a changed Cu status by the end of the Zn supplementation period.

The second and less obvious change this year has been a drop in the amount of palm kernel (PKE) fed. PKE has a high Cu content, approximately four to five times that normally found in pasture. If you have been feeding

PKE consistently in the past it will have been masking the risk of marginal to low Cu intakes. Consequently, if you have stopped or significantly cut back on PKE this year, your herd will be at greater risk once again.

With these two considerations in mind make sure your herd's Cu status is checked. If not done before drying off, be sure to do it a good month or more pre-mating. Liver biopsies are still the most accurate way to assess the Cu status of a herd. Select pregnant cows with no long term health issues that have been part of the herd since the start of the season. The alternative is to have samples collected from cull cows at the time of slaughter. The disadvantage of this option is that you have no control over which animals are tested and they will typically be empty and may have underlying health issues that could skew the results. Also, on occasions due to oversight, the works fail to collect the samples and the opportunity is lost.

Once the liver Cu levels are known an appropriate level of Cu supplementation can be planned for the herd in the coming season.

Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for June include...

Dairy

- **Transition management** – see **article P6**.
- **Pre-calving vaccinations** – see **article P4**.
- **Calf shed preparation** – don't leave it till the first calf hits the ground! Look over your sheds and get them in tip-top shape in plenty of time before calving. Also consider management of bobby calves – there's currently a VERY strong focus on their welfare (**article P3**). Save the date for our annual calf rearing seminar – Wednesday June 8th for Manawatu, Thursday June 9th for Taranua.
- **Body condition scoring** – keep an eye on cow condition as calving approaches and adjust cow intakes as appropriate – too fat or too skinny can mean problems at calving

and can have long term negative effects.

- **Teatsealing** – talk to your vet about if this would be of benefit to your heifers and, if so, what's involved in it.
- **Trace element monitoring** – if not already done, between now and pre-mating is the time for liver biopsies (either standing or from culls) to ensure adequate levels of trace elements, particularly copper (**article P1**) and selenium.

HA HA



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Licking Lice

Joanna Purdie

As we head into winter it's a good time to think about lice prevention.

Lice are host specific external parasites that won't breed on other types of animals. They spend their entire life cycle on their host and cannot survive off the animal for more than a few days, so are spread mainly by direct contact between infested cattle. Lice populations peak in winter and early spring, and infestations are generally worse on young and/or poorly conditioned cattle.

There are two types of lice:

- 1) Biting lice (*Bovicola bovis*) which feed on skin debris and are more common on beef cattle.
- 2) Sucking lice (*Linognathus vituli*) which are the most common, particularly in dairy cattle, and feed on blood and tissue fluid.

Both kinds of lice result in skin irritation, causing cattle to rub against fences and trees leading to significant hair loss as well as hide damage. To date there is not convincing evidence that lice infestations significantly

affect weight gain or milk production, but lousy cattle may be difficult to sell at sale yards and tend to cause damage to infrastructure whilst scratching themselves!

You can check for lice on stock by parting the hair over the neck, along the back, at the tail head, the area around the vulva and anus, and right down to the udder. Lice eggs (nits) are white and attached to hair shafts and can be seen with the naked eye, as can clusters of nymphs and adults.

Strategic treatment in early winter should control lice. All cattle on the property must be treated at the same time and any new stock must be quarantined and treated. There are numerous lice treatment options available such as abamectin based pour-ons (such as Genesis™, Eclipse®, Boss®) that are safe and effective at killing both biting and sucking lice. NilTime® LV is a carbamate pour-on with nil milk withholding period marketed as a specific lice treatment. There are still organophosphate products on the market (such as Tempor®, Destruct) which are very effective at killing lice but less safe for humans, so must be used with caution.

Talk to your vet about lice control and the best product to consider for your farming system.



Sheep and Beef

- Winter ewe management – monitor body condition score of ewes as winter progresses – if under or over-conditioned there may be problems come lambing time. Consider mid-winter shearing and plan for pre-lamb vaccinations – see **article P7**.

Deer

- **Pregnancy scanning hinds** – see **article P4**.

Equine

- **Winter spelling** – “out of sight” can sometimes mean “out of mind” so do remember to pull in any turned out horses regularly. Remove rugs to check body condition and for any problems such as cover rubs or lice.
- **Foot abscesses** – wet weather can undermine the integrity of hooves and cause them to develop bruising and/or abscesses. Keep an eye out for any signs of lameness

and get any problems checked out quickly. Additionally, avoid horses standing in consistently wet conditions. Aim to provide at least a small area of dry footing at all times.

- **Mud fever/rain scald** – again, wet weather can result in a number of skin infections/irritations. If caught early most conditions are cheaply and easily treated, but if left to worsen, can become a painful, costly and frustrating issue to deal with.



Bobby calf welfare

Ryan Carr

Regardless of your opinion on it, the recent broadcast of TV One’s Sunday programme was powerful. We all know that the majority of bobby calves are not treated that way on New Zealand (NZ) farms but what Farmwatch and SAFE have very effectively done is to focus attention on bobby calf welfare and animal welfare in general in the dairy industry.

Interest in where food comes from, and the wellbeing of the animals that produce that food, is climbing steadily within NZ and amongst the overseas markets that we depend on to buy our products. The footage and the accompanying campaign from SAFE have the power to significantly damage the dairy industry at a time when it is already vulnerable.

While the show was deliberate and hostile, and some of it was ridiculous, it is not enough to just say “things aren’t like that on our farm”. Individual farms and all NZ farming industries (not just dairy) have to look closely at themselves in respect to animal welfare. The wider dairy industry is doing just that and it is starting, logically, with bobby calves.

An action group made up of representatives from all parts of the industry has been working to come up with ways to improve bobby calf welfare. This includes fast tracking enforceable regulations around bobby calf

care on farm, collection, transport and processing as well as setting up a voluntary welfare improvement programme. Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is also currently taking public consultation on proposed changes to animal welfare regulations (see the MPI website) and DairyNZ, in conjunction with local vet clinics (including ours), are currently presenting a series of seminars around the country on bobby calf welfare.

Practically speaking, it would be great if, on your farm, you could take some time to make sure you are compliant with the animal welfare codes. You can download the animal welfare code from the internet or, if you want to avoid leafing through the whole document, talk to your vet on the specific rules relating to the different areas of your business. Beyond that it might be a good exercise to think about practices on your farm and how they would look if someone who didn’t understand farming was watching. Could you justify it or is there some other better way?

What the very one-sided story on Sunday failed to mention was that NZ was ranked number one in the world (along with Australia, United Kingdom and Switzerland) in the most recent Global Animal Welfare Protection Index. Mahatma Ghandi once said “the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”... Let’s continue working to keep NZ one of the greatest nations in the world.



Pre-calving vaccinations

Mark Eames

One important step in the planning for and lead-up to calving is the decision to make around use of any pre-calving vaccinations.

Vaccinating cows before calving is an effective method of helping to protect not only the cows themselves (depending on vaccine used) but primarily their new-born calves, particularly in regards to controlling neonatal calf scours.

Vaccination stimulates a specific antibody response against the target pathogens and the cow then concentrates these antibodies into her colostrum. Provided the management of this colostrum is appropriate, and the new-born calves receive adequate amounts early enough, the calves absorb the antibodies into their bloodstream and become protected against systemic infections.

Two calf scour vaccines are Scourguard® 4KC and Rotavec® Corona. They effectively

stimulate increased production of antibodies to rotavirus, coronavirus and E.coli pathogens. By far, the majority of calf scour cases that we see involve one or more of these pathogens. Cryptosporidium is a notable exception that there is no effective vaccine for.

If the decision is made to use one of these vaccines it is important that attention is paid to the detail of the vaccine program, particularly the timing of vaccination, and also to the storage and care of colostrum from vaccinated cows.

The next critical point is that all calves must receive adequate (being 10% of a calf's body weight - generally two to four litres), good quality (being from a cow's first milking following calving) colostrum within six to twelve hours of it's birth. This is essential as these first few hours are the only chance for the antibodies to pass through the gut wall and enter the blood stream. The gut wall begins closing after six hours and after 24 hours the antibodies from the colostrum can only act in the gut itself, not in the blood stream. The two VITAL points here are:

- Time is of the essence – there is no going back to those first six to twelve “golden” hours!

- Colostrum is not all created equal – store first milking colostrum separately! Colostrum from subsequent milkings (two to four) should then be pooled and stored for future feeding.

Given the economic climate, it may be tempting to try and reduce cost, however optimal results are obtained if a whole herd cow vaccination policy is adopted. This will ensure that the level of infection and consequent virus excretion in calves is kept to a minimum and consequently the overall level of disease challenge on the farm is kept to a minimum.

Other diseases also worth considering vaccinating against pre-calving are clostridial diseases such as tetanus, black leg and malignant oedema. Additionally, if it's previously been an issue, vaccination against salmonella may also be worth considering. Vaccinating for these diseases two to four weeks prior to calving will help protect the calves from these diseases as well as providing protection to the adult stock.

Contact your vet to discuss potential pre-calving vaccinations that may be right for you.

Pregnancy scanning deer

Barry Askin

Scanning of hinds is highly recommended if you want to get the most out of your fawning.

It can be used as a tool to remove empty hinds to save feeding them over the winter, identify potential stag failures early, identify early and late fawners (see comments below) and provides valuable information if you need to investigate a low fawning to weaning percentage - were they ever in fawn to begin with?

To get the most out of your hind scanning it is essential that you plan carefully to ensure that

it is carried out at the appropriate time. Hinds can be diagnosed as pregnant from about 30 days of pregnancy onwards. After about 120 days of pregnancy it may still be possible to scan a hind and pick up a pregnancy however they can be missed and incorrectly diagnosed as empty because an advanced pregnancy has a tendency to fall deep into the abdomen. In deer we do not have the luxury of inserting an arm into the rectum to check!



Advantages of sheep scanning

Hamish Pike

Scanning percentage is the key indicator of how efficient a sheep flock has performed over the mating period.

Making use of scanning data can help reduce ewe wastage, lamb losses and improve lamb growth rates which are also key drivers of flock efficiency. Having information about barren ewes, and which ewes are carrying multiple lambs, has the following advantages:

1. Allows identification and culling of dry ewes which has a two fold effect - will obviously lead to increased cash flow, but will also reduce the overall demand for feed over the winter.
2. Lamb survival rates are likely to be improved by improving the birth weights of twin lambs due to preferential feeding of ewes carrying multiple lambs.

3. Ewe deaths from twin lamb disease and bearings in those carrying multiple lambs is likely to be reduced due to preferential feeding and better feed allocation.
4. Ewes carrying multiple lambs can also be allocated paddocks more suitable for lambing. Lamb losses through starvation and exposure can be reduced markedly through provision of shelter to ewes having multiple lambs. Mis-mothering can also be minimised by lambing multiple-bearing ewes on flatter country.
5. By improved feeding of ewes carrying multiple lambs, lamb growth rates will be improved through higher colostrum and milking performance of the ewe. Also, ewes with multiple lambs will be in better condition which will impact on the following mating period.
6. Improved reproductive performance will result from using twin lambs for replacements in the breeding flock in the future.

Sheep scanning can also aid in the diagnosis of reproductive problems like Toxoplasmosis and

Campylobacteriosis by potentially identifying early lamb losses and/or abnormalities. Additionally, scanning is also a good time to assess ewe body condition scores so that lighter ewes can be separated from the main mob. Light ewes can then be preferentially fed without penalizing the rest of the ewe flock.

We recommend scanning your ewes for multiples between 45 and 90 days of pregnancy. For example, if rams are joined on 10th April and removed on 22nd May, then the scanning date is best between 6th and 9th July – this being between 45 days after ram withdrawal and 90 days after joining.

Clients who regularly take advantage of our scanning service will receive booking forms in the mail. If you do not receive a booking form, are keen to invest in the benefits of scanning but have not done so previously, and/or wish to discuss your individual requirements and the services we can offer, then contact your nearest clinic. Alternatively contact one of our experienced scanners directly for more information without obligation - Ross Edwards on 0274 402 032 or Guy Haynes on 0274 555 424.

In other words, scan your hinds at least 30 days after stag removal and before 120 days after he was introduced. For example, with a three cycle mating, there is only a three week window for optimal scanning. If stag goes in on March 10 and is removed on May 13, the window for scanning is June 13 to July 8.

Pregnancies can be aged to separate late versus early fawners but this needs to be done

as early in the scanning window as possible (as close to 30 days after stag removal as possible).

If you are going to scan your hinds this year please book in early to ensure timing is optimal. Feel free to give us a call or drop into the clinic to discuss the timing of scanning, suitability of your facilities and the help required.



Transition time

Lindsay Rowe

Traditionally the period from three to four weeks before calving through to three to four weeks following calving has been considered the **transition period**.

This period is when as much as eighty percent of the herd's disease costs are generated and where up to four percent of cows are culled from the herd as a consequence of problems arising at this time. We are now being encouraged to think of this as a 90 day period extending from 60 days prior to calving through to 30 days following calving.

Given the close connection between metabolic diseases, reproductive performance, efficient rumen function and immune suppression, a carefully planned and executed transition feeding programme is now seen as a prime opportunity to set the herd up for a successful season. Information from Dairy Australia would indicate that the return on investment is likely to be \$4.00 to \$5.00 per \$1.00 spent!

For the dairy cow, numerous changes are occurring as they prepare to dry off and then set up for another birth and then a fresh lactation – changes such as:

- The cessation of milking at dry-off
- Changes in their environment and their ration
- Rapid foetal growth
- A decline in dry matter intake just prior to calving
- The start of colostrum production
- Rapid changes in blood hormonal levels
- The process of giving birth
- A rapid increase in milk production

A further complication to these changes is that this year many cows will need a longer dry period with ad-lib feeding throughout in order to provide the opportunity for facial eczema damaged livers to heal and for sufficient weight gain to occur so that target body condition scores can be reached by the start of calving.

A well-managed transition period will set the scene for top milk yields and maximal fertility. Conversely, if not well managed, production will be curbed and herd fertility will be adversely affected.

The focus of the transition period is to:

- Help prepare and adapt the rumen for the high intakes required of the milking cow diet – the quicker a cow reaches her peak intake following calving the less weight she will lose, with the obvious flow-on effect into increased production and improved fertility.
- Help prepare the cow to manage her blood calcium levels. Low blood calcium at the time of calving is most obviously seen as milk fever but this is just the tip of the iceberg – remember that for every case of milk fever that you treat there will be 15 or 16 other cows in the herd that will be suffering from a reduced appetite ultimately leading to lost production and reduced fertility. Added to this there will be the increased risk of disease through a suppression of their immune system.

There are now a number of tools available, as well as a range of products, that can assist the herd manager to fully prepare cows to successfully transition from late pregnancy and to become the highly efficient “athlete” required on the modern dairy farm – talk it over with your vet sometime soon!

Working with WorkSafe

Debra Perrins

Sam Koronui and myself, Debra Perrins, are part of the seven strong team of WorkSafe Health and Safety assessment inspectors based in Palmerston North. Over the next few months the team will be visiting farms in the area to do farm assessments.

Our approach is to provide relevant, easy-to-read information, advice and guidance to farmers so they can implement key health and safety practices. We engage by working with a wide range of stakeholders - sector groups challenge and support our mandate and help communicate important health and safety messages. We also enforce the law - this is part of a process that starts with educating and engaging, and ends with holding those who do not comply to account.

Every year, WorkSafe inspectors carry out 12,500 workplace assessments. These are proactive, planned visits and are rarely triggered by a report of serious harm, or an actual health and safety complaint.

If an inspector visits your farm they will chat to you about the following areas:

- Training and supervision
- Risk assessment
- Hazardous chemicals
- Work related health
- Vehicle safety
- Emergency planning
- Contractor/visitor management

For more information on a farm assessment, contact Debra on 021 780 863 or Sam on 021 783 844.



Mid-winter shearing and pre-lamb vaccination

Rachy Fouhy

Mid-winter shearing and pre-lamb vaccination of pregnant ewes are both relatively common activities on New Zealand (NZ) farms.

MID-WINTER SHEARING

The main reasons for mid-winter shearing include:

- Less cast ewes and ewe losses over winter/spring.
- Potential to increase lamb birthweight.
- Improved wool quality.

Ideally mid-winter shearing should take place at 50-100 days gestation. Too soon after ram removal risks early abortions and later than 100 days risks pregnancy toxemia and milk fever if close to lambing.

The key factors to successful mid-winter shearing include:

- Timing of shearing.
- The ability to provide additional saved feed.
- Provision of adequate shelter for three to five days after shearing.

Mid-winter shearing can be a stressful experience for sheep especially if the weather changes at the last minute. With this in mind it would be best not to shear very light sheep. Additionally, if you have been seriously impacted by facial eczema in your flock this year it is advisable to have a chat with your

vet prior to mid-winter shearing to ensure that it won't have a negative impact.

To achieve a birth weight response from mid pregnancy shearing, ewes must have:

- The **potential** (those destined to give birth to light weight lambs) and;
- The **means** (those that have an adequate level of maternal reserves - i.e. those that have good body condition and/or those offered a good level of nutrition).

A positive survival response from shearing during pregnancy is most likely to occur in lambs born as twins or triplets when birth weights are otherwise destined to be below four kilograms. Shearing during pregnancy can increase birth weights of these lambs 300-500g which can make a big difference to their survival rate. The response appears to be most consistent when ewes are shorn between days 55 and 100 of pregnancy, the **optimum time being 88 days** after the introduction of the ram.

PRE-LAMB VACCINATIONS

These are an essential part of successful ewe flock management around lambing time. Ideally all vaccinating should take place two to three weeks before lambing starts, when it can be a bit of a struggle to find a fine day, but the timing is really important. If sheep are vaccinated with a standard vaccine four weeks out from lambing, the later ewes may not be adequately protected.

It is also vital that sheep have actually had the **initial clostridial vaccination course** – two shots four weeks apart. For example, obviously depending on your farm practices, this means vaccinating at docking and then again at weaning (as lambs) then a year later and so forth. So, if your hoggets/two-tooths have not had an initial clostridial vaccination prior to their pre-lamb vaccination, they will require

two shots four weeks apart, otherwise the single shot will only have limited efficacy.

Like most areas in farming: there is a wide selection of products available with something for everyone! So what is best for you?

Clostridial vaccination options include:

- Ultravac™ (1ml dose) or Coopers Multine® 5-in-1 (2ml dose) are vaccine only products - easy to use and suitable for all classes of stock.
- Nilvax® 5-in-1 is technically a vaccine plus drench (levamisole), however the drench has limited effect. The main effect of levamisole is the increase the antibody response of the ewe so she makes more antibodies thereby providing a greater level of protection for her lamb(s). Can be used four to six weeks away from lambing which provides greater flexibility for farmers.
- Eweguard® is also a vaccine and a drench (moxidectin). This drench is long acting against some worm species, however it's long "tail" and widespread use is strongly linked to increased drench resistance, especially with *Ostertagia*. Hence this product should be used with caution and sparingly.

Many products now come with the option of added selenium (Se) so, if required, you can "feed two birds with one scone" by using one that contains Se. If you are unsure of your flock's Se status then consider getting some bloods or livers done as low Se levels, amongst other things, can affect lamb growth rates and subsequent ewe fertility.

Have a chat with your vet to put a plan in place for your flock.

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Pre-lamb vaccination of ewes is a very wise investment.

Clostridial diseases are a constant threat to all sheep and cattle. Clostridial spores can last in the soil for decades and often the first sign of disease is sudden death of large numbers of animals, and usually the best grown animals are affected.



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