



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

DECEMBER 2017  
JANUARY 2018



## Totally Vets photo competition

**Gaye Stein**

The results are in for the Totally Vets photo competition!

Children of both primary and intermediate age groups, from up in Taumarunui down to Oroua Downs, entered our annual photo competition vying for some awesome prizes and a spot in our Totally Vets Calendar.

The categories of **domestic pets, farm animals and people at work on the farm** meant that a very broad range of pictures were received. The quality of the entries was very high this year with the top thirteen being of excellent quality.

The winner of the competition this year is **Leah Hart**, from Tiritea School with her picture "The work girls". The interesting composition made her an easy choice for the top thirteen and a clear winner in voting for the top prize.

Leah takes home a GoPro HERO Session prize package for herself and \$200 for her school.

Second place was awarded to **Max Dodunski** with his picture "New friends". Max won \$150 for himself as well as \$150 for his school. **Emma Humphrey** came in third with her picture "Cheeky Stag" and we are sure you will agree that this is an appropriate name for the photo (see [www.totallyvets.co.nz](http://www.totallyvets.co.nz) for photos). Both Emma and Max attend the same school and with Emma's prize to her school of \$100 we were able to award Halcombe School a total donation of \$250.

We would like to thank all the children who sent in pictures this year. For those children who will be in years one to eight next year, keep taking photos and look out for notification on next year's competition!

**Totally Vets clients are welcome to collect a copy of our 2018 calendar from your closest branch.**



## Holiday hours

	FDG	AWA	TAU
Mon 25 Dec - Tue 26 Dec	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wed 27 Dec	8 - 6	8 - 5	8 - 5
Thu 28 Dec	8 - 6	8 - 5	8 - 5
Fri 29 Dec	8 - 5	8 - 5	8 - 5
Sat 30 Dec	9 - 2	Closed	8 - 5
Sun 31 Dec - Tue 2 Jan	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wed 3 Jan - Fri 5 Jan	8 - 6	8 - 5	8 - 5

Normal hours resume on Saturday 6 January 2018

**Please note we have a 24-hour emergency service if required:**

**Feilding 06 323 6161**  
**Awapuni 06 356 5011**  
**Taumarunui 07 895 8899**

# Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for **December and January** include...

## DAIRY

- Book in early pregnancy scanning, ideally six weeks after end of artificial insemination.

- **Clinical Mastitis** – monitor cows and be aware of rising bulk milk somatic cell count (**article P2**) particularly if using relief milkers over the holiday period.
- **Continue weaner management** – drench regularly, weigh to monitor growth rates, consider the need for trace mineral supplementation and ensure adequate nutrition.
- **Facial eczema season** may begin early so, weather depending, plan to start preventative zinc treatment in January.

- Once we get some summer sun, **lameness** may become an issue as the land hardens so monitor cows daily. Hot, dry, dusty weather can increase the incidence of some diseases such as **pink eye** – monitor for early signs of discharge from, or white spots on, eye(s) and act quickly to separate from the mob and treat - **article P3**.

## SHEEP and BEEF

- **Weaning management** – monitor ewe body condition and check udders, ensure adequate parasite and fly strike control and consider vitamin B12 testing in lambs.

# HA HA

## WORLD of COW By Stik

www.stik.biz



## Maintaining milk quality

Ryan Carr

At this time of the year mating takes up your attention and once AB is finished it's nice to finally be able to have a breather.

With all this going on, it's easy to understand if milk quality was not at the forefront of your mind. Even small increases in the number of clinical cases or bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC) can cost you however and issues occurring now can compound as we move through the season.

At the current pay-out (according to the SmartSamm gap calculator) every case of mastitis will cost you \$63 on average, in treatments and lost milk. Every 50,000 cells/ml increase in average BMSCC for the season costs you \$3300 in lost milk production.

It is worth taking 10 minutes to ask yourself and/or chat with your team to make sure you are on track with milk quality. Ask yourself these questions:

- **Am I getting too many clinical cases of mastitis?** Aim for less than 1% of the herd per month, in the months outside of calving, on average.
- **Are too many cows in the herd over 150,000 cell/ml on herd test?** Aim for less than 15% of heifers and less than 25% of the whole herd to be over 150,000 cell/ml.
- **Is our milking technique and teat spraying up to scratch?** Work out if you are using 20ml per cow per milking for manual sprayers or 30ml per cow per milking for automatic sprayers. Make sure you aren't making up too much teat spray mixture at a time. Three days is the maximum recommended time for mixed up spray. Check that cows aren't being over-milked. Cups should not be on for more than one minute once the milk stops flowing. Check that cups are being put on with minimal air sucking and are being removed by cutting the vacuum and allowing the cups to slip free of the teats.

**As always if you're having trouble maintaining milk quality give your friendly veterinarian a call.**

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- **Barbers pole** – monitor for signs of disease (pale gums, depressed, exercise intolerant, increased breathing) and drench appropriately.
- **Ram preparations** – book in ram palpations, Brucellosis testing and organise teasers.

## DEER

- Monitor hinds regularly during fawning.
- **Stag preparations** - ensure palpations are done and feet checked prior to mating.

## EQUINE

- Maintain sport horses on joint supplements such as NV Halo Injection or Equinate™ injection if the ground is hard.
- Consider use of electrolytes for horses in heavy work particularly in hot weather and know the early signs of tying up.

**Lastly, we wish you a fantastic holiday period... have a safe, enjoyable, very well-earned break with family and friends!**



# Early Pregnancy Testing

Alex Bowes

Early pregnancy testing takes place six weeks after the end of artificial breeding (AB) and allows the age of pregnancy to be determined.

Ageing can only be carried out between six weeks and twelve weeks of pregnancy, so getting cows scanned as close to the six-week mark after the end of AB is important.

A follow-up scan on all cows with no pregnancy detected at the first scan is performed six weeks after the bulls have been taken out.

### So, why bother with an early scan?

Getting the age of the pregnancy, and therefore the date of conception and expected calving date, provides us with a lot of useful information:

- Enables accurate feed budgeting for dry period and calving
- Knowing when to bring cows back from run-offs before calving
- Matching dry-off dates to body condition score (BCS) and expected calving date
  - Milking late calvers for longer to keep milk in the vat without compromising the length of the dry period
- Transitioning cows optimally in spring
  - Knowing when to take cows off feed crops at the right time before calving
  - Adjusting pasture intake and Dietary Cation-Anion Difference (DCAD) salts to their diet in the three weeks prior to

calving to reduce the risk of milk fever

- Transitioning cows onto the milking cow diet so there are no sudden changes at calving
- Identifying cows pregnant to AB and who are the late calvers
  - This is especially useful when resources are tight and hard decisions need to be made when culling cows
- Knowing your six-week in calf rate (6WICR)
  - This a key performance indicator of how well reproduction is managed on your farm
  - The information gained from your 6WICR can indicate problem areas which need addressing on your farm

**If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to call or pop into the clinic for a chat.**

# Pink Eye in Cattle

Juan Klue

Pink eye is a highly contagious disease which causes clouding and inflammation of eyes, squinting, and excessive eye discharge that often contains pus.

Animals seek shade and avoid direct sunlight, have reduced weight gain, and may even lose weight. Eyes can ulcerate which can heal leaving a white scar on the cornea or the eye can rupture through the corneal ulcer leaving the animal permanently blind in that eye.

Carrier animals are the reservoir of infection and flies spread infection. Factors which may predispose pink eye include dust and pollen, UV light, and trauma from grazing in wooded areas.

Infection is most common in the summer months, but can occur all year around.

Treatment includes antibiotic creams or subconjunctival injection, antibiotic spray around the eyes aiding control during outbreak situations. In more severe cases, the eyelids may be temporarily sewn together by your vet.

**If you see signs of pink eye call your vet before things escalate.**



2017's largest snapper caught by Bruce Callon

# 2018 Fishing Competition

**Carla Sheridan**

Get your fishing gear ready and wash the barnacles off the boat, it's time to get ready for the 2018 Totally Vets Group Fishing Competition.

The date of Saturday 24th March has been locked in for fishing – we're hoping to get to the big fish before the masses clean them out over Easter!

The tides are perfect with low tide at 9.59am and high tide at 4.02pm. This should mean an easy launch at sunrise with plenty of water in the channel so all anglers can be in the line for weigh-in by 3pm.

We are intending to run with a similar format to last year's very successful event with prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each of the species categories, a one-off prize for the "most average" snapper and a trophy for the largest snapper caught on the day.

**Entry forms will be in your local clinic soon.**

# Theileria

**Hamish Pike**

*Theileria orientalis* is a tick-borne blood parasite, i.e. it is spread by infected ticks when they feed on an animal's blood.

*Theileria orientalis* affects both beef and dairy cattle and it can infect cattle of any age. Cows over the calving period and young cattle (two to three months of age) however are most at risk of disease. There are no known human health risks associated with this disease.

Disease incidence on a farm, i.e. the proportion of the herd affected, can be variable. However, most cattle will show no obvious signs of disease but some cattle within a herd will suffer severe disease which, if left untreated, could lead to anaemia and potentially death.

*Theileria* can enter a property either **via infected ticks on animals** (including all wildlife) or **via *Theileria*-infected cattle** which then infect the local resident tick population.

The disease causes signs associated with anaemia:

- pale or yellow vulval mucous membranes
- whites of eyes are pale to yellow (blood vessels are not clearly visible)
- cows stay or lag behind the main mob (i.e. they are lethargic)
- cows do not respond as expected to treatment for conditions such as milk fever
- cows are off their food and appear hollow-sided in the abdomen
- there is a decrease in milk production, and a potential for poor reproductive performance

- there may be poor health and low performance in your young stock
- there may be deaths especially close to calving or early lactation.

Disease outbreaks can be triggered by stress, particularly around calving time, or even when there is underlying disease and/or certain nutritional deficiencies, e.g. gut parasites, BVD (Bovine Virus Diarrhoea), facial eczema, trace element deficiency.

Treatment of infected cattle with signs of the disease depends on the incidence and severity. Contact your local veterinarian for advice if you suspect animals with the above clinical signs.

Control of ticks is strongly advised particularly if moving cattle from one property to another (especially if there is a known history of ticks) or if there have been signs associated with anaemia in the past. This can be achieved by treating all cattle with flumethrin (e.g. Bayticol® Pour-On) before leaving the property.

Also, check for tick presence on cattle already on the property as treatment with flumethrin may be useful to reduce the tick numbers and severity of disease.

Lastly, ensure that all underlying causes of stress or concurrent disease are being controlled, e.g. efficient transition and nutritional management, effective parasite control, effective trace element supplementation, monitoring and control of BVD and facial eczema prevention.

**Please do not hesitate to contact your local veterinarian for further information and/or advice if you have any concerns.**

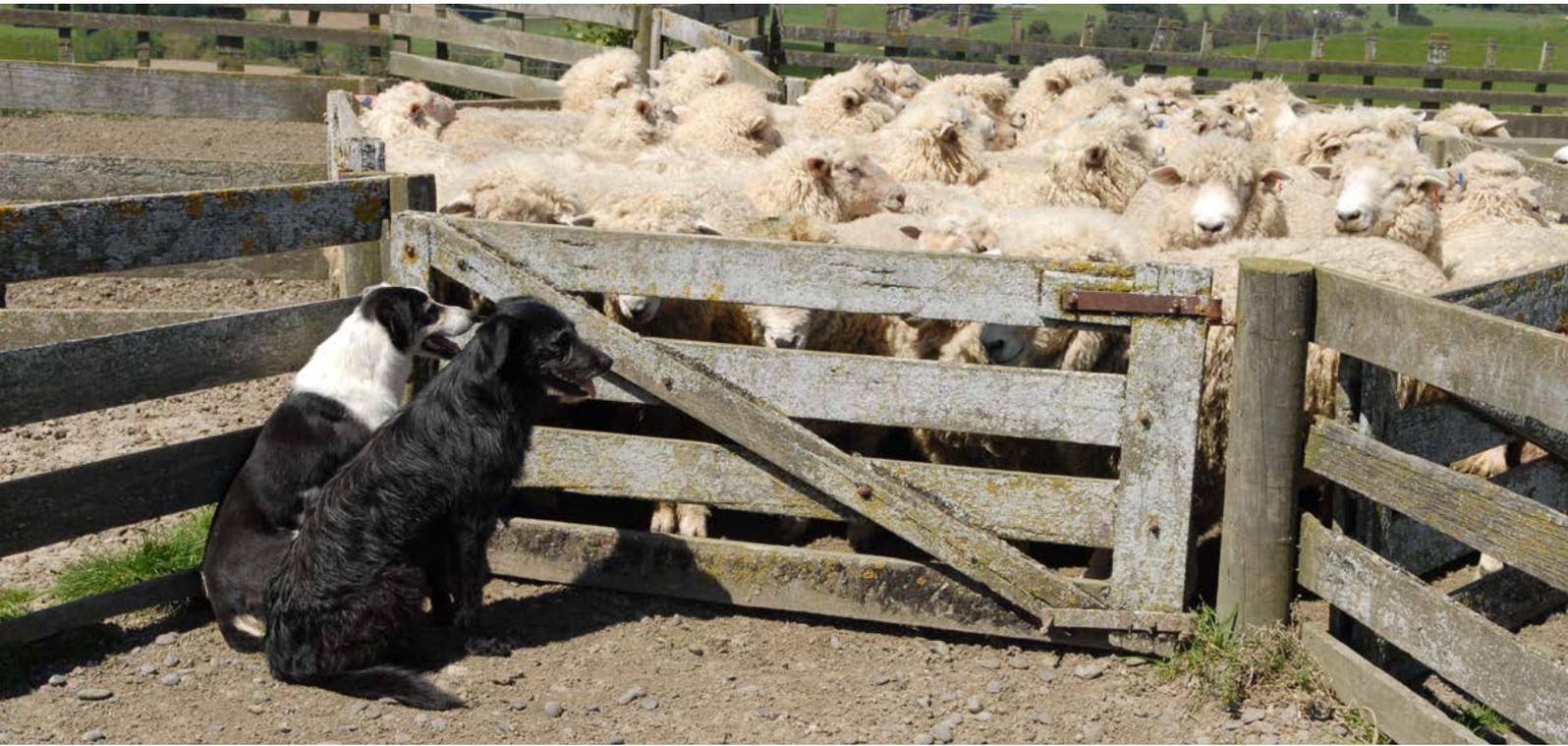
*Haemaphysalis longicornis* (cattle tick) before feeding and engorged after feeding



Before feeding



After feeding



# Feeding working dogs

Rachael Fouhy

With the long and busy days associated with weaning just around the corner, now is a good time to reassess how we feed our biggest on-farm assets – our team of working dogs.

Working dog nutrition has come a long way in the last 10 years and there are a variety of feeds on the market. Good nutrition affects a dog’s energy levels, tolerance to illness and injury, and longevity as a working dog.

Feeding a high quality diet formulated for a high workload has been proven to increase endurance and decrease soft tissue injuries and stress fractures of bones. Unlike pet dogs, working dogs need a calorie dense diet. There are three key components of a diet – fat which is the most calorie dense component, protein which provides calories for sustained energy and essential amino acids for building and repairing muscles, and carbohydrate which provides short bursts of energy.

Some diets are low in protein and high in carbohydrate, they tend to be very bulky and filling. These diets are similar to eating weetbix and many dogs can’t physically eat enough to meet their energy needs. Dogs on these diets also tend to pass a lot of poo.

Working dogs need a diet which is

- At least 25% protein
- At least 20% fat
- An energy content of over 4000kcal/kg

All this information is clearly listed on the back of dog food bags. Also have a look at the list of ingredients – they are listed in order from highest to lowest, ideally choose a diet that has a protein listed first, i.e. chicken as opposed to chicken by-pass meal.

All food bags will also state if they meet **AFFCO food standards** or **AFFCO feeding trials**. There is a big difference. Meeting food standards is like making a cake according to a recipe, the feeding trial is ensuring it is edible.

The majority of working dogs will do best with a mixed diet which consists of sheep meat and a premium food. Weight loss over a busy period is not uncommon especially in younger dogs – in these cases dogs may benefit from a hand full of premium food when they are let off in the morning. Food before exercise is a known risk to GDVs (Gastric dialation volvulus - bloat/twisted stomach), however a small handful is fine and for many dogs this snack has enabled them to maintain weight.

All our clinics stock a wide range of dog food, the most popular working dog formulations being Eukanumba premium performance and Royal Canin 4800.

We see a range of working dog problems over summer including:

1. **Heat Stress** – on hot days some dogs will work themselves to a standstill, on farm these dogs can sometimes appear to have a “fit”. If this happens to your dog cool them down as fast as possible – put them in a dam or trough ensuring their head stays above the water, and get them into the clinic. They need intensive fluid therapy to prevent internal organ damage. Most dogs make a complete recovery.
2. **Constipation** – common in older dogs who eat a diet of bones and Tux. Many dogs often have a form of arthritis in their tail which can affect their ability to squat and defecate. In these situations, taking the dog for a run is the worst thing you can do. This does not stimulate them to poo, instead it dehydrates them more and can make the problem worse. In bitches being constipated can also affect their ability to pee, please act promptly if you are concerned that your dog is constipated.

**For advice on which food to feed your working dog (or pet) talk to the team in your clinic.**

# Do you know your dog could be costing farmers money?

Mary Lund

Dogs are part of the lifecycle of a tapeworm called *Cysticercus ovis*. This worm causes 'sheep measles'.

Dogs become infected by ingesting infected meat. The tapeworm releases eggs which are found in the dog's faeces and these infect sheep, causing disease. Sheep measles are small cysts found throughout the meat of infected sheep and goats. The cysts begin as small, clear 'blisters' within and on the surface of the meat; over time, these calcify to become white and gritty.

While they pose no risk at all to human health, a diner slicing into a perfectly prepared New Zealand (NZ) French rack in a European restaurant expects to see flawless, tender lamb - one little gritty cyst is all it takes to ruin this experience! Thus sheep measles are a quality and market access issue for the entire NZ meat industry. Because of this, meat inspectors examine carcasses carefully, trim and downgrade any that are affected.

## Prevention

If feeding sheep meat to dogs, ensure it has been either frozen to -10°C or colder for a minimum of seven days, or heated to at least 72°C throughout. This will inactivate any cysts (which would infect the dog).

Ensure dogs do not have access to raw sheep or goat meat - bury any dead carcasses.

**Most importantly**, any dogs that are on farms or have access to farms **including small blocks** should be dosed for tapeworms.

This can be done by giving an all-wormer such as Drontal® every three months, with monthly treatments of a praziquantal wormer such as Wormicide Tape® to target tapeworms specifically. This will ensure your dog is free of *Cysticercus ovis*.

Our meat export market is important to NZ. Please protect it by worming your dog's appropriately if they are going to be around sheep at all.

**For more information, please do not hesitate to contact us or visit the sheep measles website - <http://www.sheepmeasles.co.nz/>**

# From the left-field files – Viagra as the silver bullet for triplet lamb survival?!

Ginny Dodunksi



If you're asked to name a drug that increases blood flow to somewhere in the body you'll probably laugh and answer 'Viagra' – right?

Well did you know that Viagra (sildenafil citrate) also has this effect on the pregnant uterus?

Viagra has been shown to increase birthweight in rats and in single bearing ewes; presumably as a result of this improved blood flow through the placenta, and foetal growth mediators have been found in higher concentrations in the uterine fluids of treated animals.

The intrepid scientists at Massey University's International Sheep Research Centre, armed with this knowledge, set out to determine whether the administration of this drug to ewes in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, could improve triplet lamb survival.

The work was done under highly controlled conditions on a fairly small group of ewes, but the results have been quite startling and definitely an encouragement to continue looking further at the potential of Viagra.

Viagra-treated ewes showed the following improvements over untreated ewes:

- 93% of treated ewes had all three lambs born alive versus 33% of untreated ewes
- 88% overall lamb survival in the treated group versus 49% of untreated ewes' lambs
- Treated ewes lambed four days later than untreated ewes
- Lambs from treated ewes were heavier than lambs from untreated ewes
- Treated ewes ate less but appeared in better condition

Wow! If we could find something that could consistently give us 88% survival in triplet lambs it would be easy to get enthusiastic about managing these ewes properly!

**The Viagra was administered to these sheep three times a day through an indwelling catheter, so not something you'd easily do on-farm, but watch this space and perhaps in time we might have a simple solution to one of our big sheep production headaches!**



# Nitrate Poisoning

Steve Harvey

A few years ago, I received a call in late spring to a farm where a herd was falling over, several had died and many were having trouble breathing. When I got some information from the client he informed me he had held his cows back and had released them all at once into a paddock of new grass.

What was seen is typical of nitrate poisoning, which is a relatively common problem in grazing livestock in our temperate climate, and often follows when livestock graze young, rapidly growing pastures and crops that haven't converted all their nitrates into protein.

The results of nitrate poisoning can be very dramatic, with animals often giving no warning and collapsing suddenly. Accumulation of nitrites in the rumen leads to these being absorbed into the blood stream. The nitrites bind with haemoglobin and thus limits the oxygen carrying capacity of the red blood cells. Animals become oxygen starved and without prompt treatment can die.

## Which animals are commonly affected?

Sheep, cattle, deer and goats all get nitrate poisoning. Cattle are the most susceptible, and sheep the most resistant.

## What symptoms can I expect to see?

- Rapid breathing, weakness, tremors and imbalance are the first signs (animals often look drunk in the early stages).
- They will also salivate and froth at the mouth, and then start to gasp for breath. Affected cows will then go down, and if untreated may die.
- The staggering is due to lack of oxygen to the brain. The gasping for breath is basically a reflex to try and get more oxygen into the system. The animal is essentially suffocating.
- When administering IV treatments (usually used is Methylene Blue) it should be evident that the blood has turned a 'chocolate brown' colour. This is due to the presence of high levels of methaemoglobin in the blood (a consequence of nitrites binding to the haemoglobin).

## How long does toxicity take to occur?

A cow can consume a toxic amount of nitrate in one hour, and can start to show signs very soon after. If cows are grazing a toxic paddock, then there can very quickly be a number of animals affected and it becomes real emergency. It can take up to four hours for signs to become evident so animals should be

monitored closely during this one to four hour period when grazing suspect crops.

## What climatic conditions predispose plants to accumulating high levels of Nitrate?

Basically, conditions which cause rapid growth spurts will predispose plants to accumulating high levels of nitrate. It is commonly seen under the following two scenarios:

- a. Drought conditions allowing build-up of nitrate in and around roots of the plants followed by a significant rain event (sudden uptake of nutrients and growth spurt of plant).
- b. Warm/humid overcast weather enabling good growing conditions but limited photosynthesis opportunity for the plants to convert nitrates into protein.

## How do I minimise the risk of nitrate poisoning?

The best advice is to test any suspect crops prior to feeding. Samples need to be at least a full bread bag size. Totally Vets will have samples analysed on the same day if samples are brought in early in the day. **If crop is above 1% nitrate content**, then give other food first, especially high energy food, so that rumen bacteria can work at full speed. Graze the crop for 1-2 hours only. Graze in afternoon when the crop has had maximum exposure to sunlight, which decreases the nitrate levels. **If results is above 2% don't feed till retested.**



# COMPLETE FLYSTRIKE PROTECTION!

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