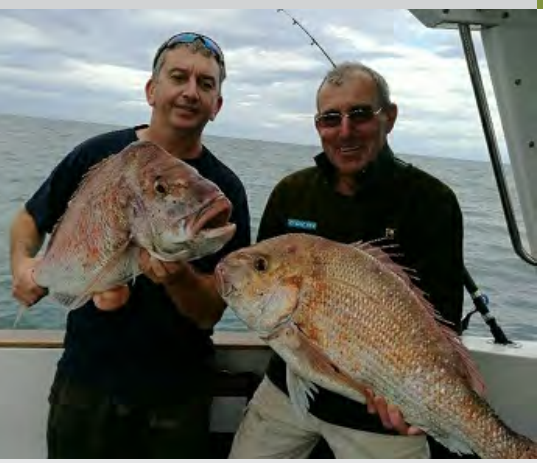
TOTALLY VETS
ANIMAL CARE & EXPERTISE

VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

MAY 2018



Fishing competition results

Carla Sheridan

It was near perfect conditions on Saturday 24th March for the annual Totally Vets Group Fishing Competition at Whanganui.

Boats launched early to beat the mud and tides with over 100 eager anglers on board.

Once again we were very generously supported by our sponsors and we had well over $5000 worth of goodies to hand out.

Most boats caught their limits and there were some very impressive fish across the scales at the weigh-in. The eagerly contested prize for "Most Average Snapper" went to Pete Loveridge, with Dan Flanagan taking out the trophy for the largest snapper with an 8.10kg monster.

Check out the Totally Vets website for a full round-up and results from the day.

Look forward to seeing you all and more at next year's event.

Copper Deficiency

Emma Scott

The classic signs of copper deficiency are not as common these days and most of the time we are aiming to achieve levels that optimise production.

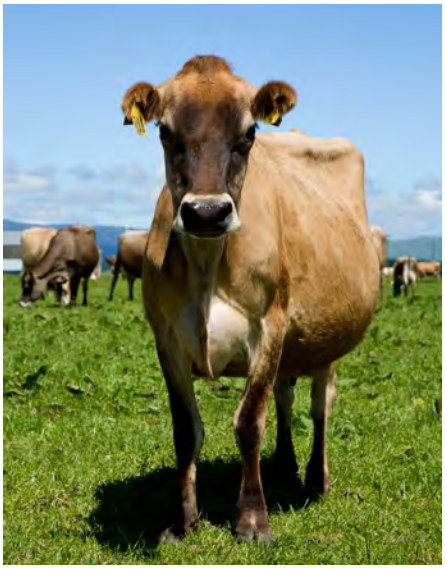
Copper deficiency can contribute to reduced growth rates in young cattle, diarrhoea, bone defects, lightening of the coat colour with patches of grey around the eyes, anaemia and possibly reduced milk production and poor reproductive performance.

Young deer suffer reduced growth rates and adult deer develop a condition called 'swayback' where they lose co-ordination of their hind end. Lambs can also suffer from swayback. Copper deficiency in sheep will also lead to weak bones, wool abnormalities and possibly reduced fertility.

Inadequate copper levels are usually due to interfering minerals in the soil/pasture and not low levels of copper in the diet. Minerals that reduce the absorption of copper are called antagonists.

The main antagonists are:

- **Zinc** - Many farmers must treat with high levels of zinc over the facial eczema (FE) season to prevent disease. Severe outbreaks of FE in zinc treated animals have been linked to high copper levels. If copper levels are adequate, copper supplementation should stop while animals are being supplemented with zinc. It is important to check animal trace element levels in the autumn following zinc FE treatment.



- **Molybdenum** - Pasture molybdenum levels increase in water-logged soils over winter.
- **Iron** - During winter, the amount of soil, and hence iron, ingested by animals increases (it can be up to 10% of the diet if grazing short muddy pastures, if silage has a lot of soil contamination or if the water table is high).

Copper requirements are higher during the late winter/early spring due to the demands of the developing foetus and early lactation so autumn is a good time of the year to test trace element levels in the herd to see whether there is enough copper reserve to get them through.

Assessing copper status is not always as simple as reading the test result from the lab. In interpreting lab results, age/breed of animals, feeding, level of production, copper, molybdenum, sulphur and iron levels in the feed, clinical signs of deficiency and previous copper use are all important factors that your vet will consider when advising on copper supplementation.

Looking ahead

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

DAIRY

- **Drying off** – although feed may not be such a limiting factor this season it is important to keep a good eye on cow body condition to ensure it doesn't drop too low. Be aware of falling production levels and potential increased risk of inhibitory substance grades.
- **Herd testing** – Bulk milk somatic cell count will likely be rising as lactation progresses and cows are beginning to be dried off. Consider investing in a herd test to gain valuable information to assist in making dry-off and dry-cow therapy decisions.
- **Trace element monitoring** – pre-winter is a good time for liver biopsies (either standing or from culls) to ensure levels of copper, selenium and cobalt are adequate.

Theileria update

Rachael Fouhy

Each Spring we see a few cases of Theileira in dairy cattle. The common scenario is cattle that have been away grazing outside the district and get bitten by ticks.

In the Tararuas we don't see many ticks, while in the Manawatu the tick numbers appear to be variable depending on the season. As a result, our cows are at risk of being infected whilst away at grazing. This can either be in the Hawke's Bay area, or the sand country in the Manawatu. Theileria is generally an issue for animals under stress, most commonly around calving and the greatest risk period for a cow is being bitten by a tick in the six to eight weeks pre-calving.

If cows are heading outside the area for grazing give a preventative tick treatment prior to leaving your property, and ideally every four weeks until they return home.

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Winter horse management

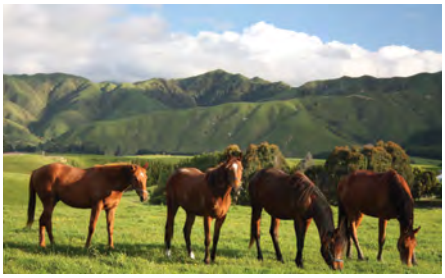
Ellie Grieves

Many people think horses get quite cold in winter being outside but a horse that is unclipped, has shelter from the elements and with adequate nutrition will be able to handle the winter months much easier than us.

Most horses must use body fat reserves to maintain their core body temperature during the cooler winter months. To prevent weight loss, ensure you provide your horse with a little extra feed. Fibre, in the form of grass or hay, is the cheapest and easiest way to keep your horse's condition, others may require topping up with hard feed.

Oil is a great source of energy for your horse and gives them a shiny coat; up to a cup can be given daily, introduced slowly over one to two weeks. Making sure your horse isn't overdue for their dental exam (most require yearly checkups) will ensure teeth aren't painful and food won't drop while being eaten.

Horses tend to pick up more worms on the pasture during winter due to its higher moisture content. Monitoring your horse's faecal egg count is a great way to determine when your horse may require worming. The type of wormer can also be tailored to each individual horse depending on the type of worm eggs found in the faeces.



Rainscald and mud fever are often seen during winter and can be challenging to treat. Rainscald is often seen after heavy rain where thick coats trap water along the back. This allows the organism *dermatophilosis congolensis* to overgrow forming scabs and sores. The best way to prevent this is to keep your horse rugged and consider clipping your horse to allow them to dry quickly. Sweat can exacerbate rainscald so change rugs according to the weather and ensure horses are completely dry before being put back in the paddock.

Mud fever is formed in a similar way. Moisture is trapped by mud on the legs allowing the skin's natural defenses to be weakened. White-haired areas are the most noticeably affected. Having mud free areas will give horse's legs a chance to dry out fully and for those in muddy paddocks washing and drying legs daily may be required to prevent this condition.

Keeping your horse healthy and happy with good nutrition, warmth and adequate selenium levels (which helps with skin defenses) will ensure your horse can maintain healthy skin, fight off infections and should prevent excessive weight loss.

If you have any problems with your horse during the winter months call us and have a chat to one of the vets.

- **Leptospirosis vaccination** – autumn is a perfect time to boost your herd prior to winter, being the period of greatest risk. Ensure that young stock are included in this programme and that the interval between annual vaccinations never extends beyond 13 months.
- **Planning for winter** – consider timing of winter shearing, when to book in your scanning, prepare an autumn/winter feed budget and relate it to body condition score. Consider the benefits of iodine supplementation of ewes.

SHEEP and BEEF

- **Mating** – as mating progresses continue to monitor plane of nutrition for ewes and rams. Maintain adequate ram ratios and ensure rams are active, sound and in good general health.

DEER

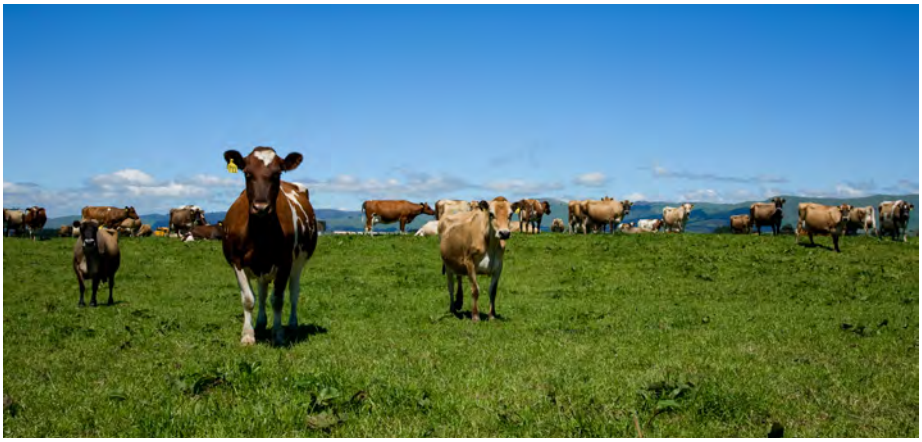
- **Mating** – keep a close eye on stags as mating progresses. Monitor general health, body condition, signs of lameness, and act quickly at any sign of a problem.

EQUINE

- **Vaccinations** – make sure all your horses are up-to-date with all their vaccinations, particularly mares that are in foal.
- **Worming** – autumn is a good time to drench horses of ALL ages with a product containing the active moxidectin (for example Ultra-mox™) to control cyathostomes which inhibit over winter, hiding from the immune system, and can cause colitis/colic.
- Planning for winter – **See article P2.**

Drying Off Nutrition

Steve Harvey



It is important to realise that the heavily pregnant cow is unlikely to put on more than half a condition score over the last two months of pregnancy.

In addition to this the weather is at its worst and the temperatures are at their lowest over winter, so the cow's maintenance is at its maximum. The cow's condition at calving is important not only for its milk production over the coming season but also its reproduction.

The key to feeding cows at this time of the year is to enable the farmer to get the maximum production over the last few months of lactation and be able to dry them off as quickly as possible to reduce the effect on weight loss. This involves feeding dairy cows on good quality pasture with or without the addition of silages. Maize silage is particularly good for putting on weight. This should ensure production is maximised with the additional energy going into body condition.

Cows have a high demand for trace elements and this does not stop because they are dried off. Check on your herd's trace element status by either having the works take liver samples from cull cows or your vet taking liver biopsies from around ten cows in the herd. In this area copper and selenium deficiencies are common and to a lesser extent Vitamin B12 (cobalt).

The high demand times for copper are late lactation when the calf demands a large amount from the cow, calving, peak lactation, mating and for optimum growth in young stock.

Ideally selenium levels should be high at the time of calving to ensure uterine involution is rapid and complete and to produce a healthy viable calf. Rapid uterine involution should minimise chances of even sub-clinical uterine infection and speed return to oestrus.

As well as trace elements, the availability of macro elements is also extremely important (particularly magnesium, calcium and phosphate). All cows must have good levels of these to avoid the risk of metabolic disease. Magnesium levels should be monitored and corrected if low over the dry period. Low magnesium, while predisposing cows to clinical staggers, more frequently is associated with milk fever or ketosis at calving time. There are no large stores of magnesium in the body (unlike calcium stores in the bones) so regular intake is necessary. Soil levels appear to have fallen in recent years throughout New Zealand and on individual farms will be affected by fertiliser practices, especially by potash and lime application, and also by pasture composition.

The other major concern is mastitis or, more correctly put, the herd's somatic cell count. You should use your herd testing results throughout the season, including the last herd test to determine who needs dry cow treatment. We are keen to assist farmers in this area and during your dry-cow consultation will discuss all these points.

Many trials have been done and the results conclusively show that dry-cow therapy (DCT) is more effective than milking-cow therapy in curing existing infections, particularly those that have become sub clinical or chronic. The preventative nature of DCT has been shown to reduce the incidence of dry-cow mastitis and the level of new infections over the early spring period. The use of teat seal may also be appropriate especially it you have a number of cows coming in with mastitis, but you should seek professional advice before going ahead.

Working dog nutrition

Helen Sheard

Farm working dogs are unlike any other working dog group - they require both endurance and speed in their day-to-day work, and designing an appropriate diet for this can be difficult.

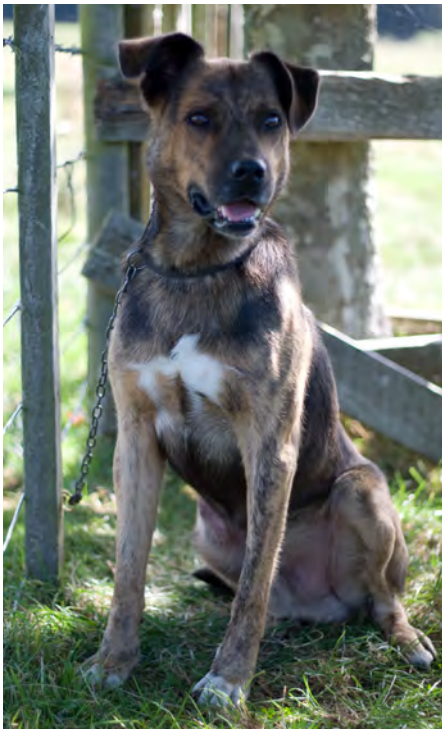
Ideally the diet should be **high in fat** and **low in carbohydrate**, as this seems to be the optimum for endurance with intermittent bursts of speed.

Protein levels are important as it has been found in a study of sled dogs that the group fed a lower percentage of protein in the diet (19% versus 24%) had eight times more musculoskeletal injuries than those in the higher protein group. This is likely to be due to the amount of protein required to repair strain and microdamage done to muscles during hard work.

Calorie content needs to be factored in also. Working dogs need one and a half to three times the calorie requirement of pet dogs, and this may increase by another 50% when working in cold weather. Foods that are calorie dense are best to feed or it may be physically impossible to feed the amount of food necessary to meet the calorie requirements of dogs in hard work. Where large amounts of food are required to meet basic calorie demands, the risk of poor digestion and twisted stomach follow.

Poor immunity, susceptibility to disease and poor wound healing have all been associated with suboptimal diets in New Zealand working dogs.

Meat only diets are often deficient in iodine, calcium, phosphorus, copper, and vitamins A, E and B12. Feeding a good quality commercial diet will make up for these deficiencies as long as meat comprises no more than 30% of the diet. Including bones within the meat will supplement calcium and phosphorus but comes with all the attendant risks of gut obstruction or perforation and constipation.



The easiest way to ensure all nutritional requirements are met is to feed a diet specifically formulated for working dogs, with a protein source as the primary ingredient, rather than a carbohydrate.