



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

JUNE 2011



This will keep them happy at home!

## Totally Vets fishing competition

Although Murray's Irish Pub was a great bad weather alternative last year, being on the water at Wanganui for this year's fishing competition was a great success and enjoyed by our clients, staff, suppliers and sponsors.

Congratulations to winners Jason Smith (4.53kg snapper), Kevin Grundy, Sean McGinty, Trevor Low, Ross Humphrey and Aaron Taylor.

A special thanks to all of our sponsors who contributed to the competition - without their generosity, it would not be possible to run this event.

## Getting value from your levies!

Ginny Dodunski

And what on earth has that got to do with Totally Vets?

Beef + Lamb NZ collect levies from all sheep and cattle slaughtered in New Zealand:

- Sheep: \$0.50/head
- Cattle excluding bobby calves: \$4.00/head

This investment is directed into 4 areas:

- 'Farm': R&D and extension activities
- 'Market': international market access, relations, promotion, branding
- 'People': leadership and voice for the sheep & beef industry
- 'Information': the B+LNZ Economic Service - provides critical information on farm financial and productive performance

Here at Totally Vets, we have a keen interest in ensuring local levypayers' investment is spent well. We are the facilitators for the Wishnowsky's Monitor Farm, and the B+LNZ Finishing Farms Seminars. Recently we had a visit to AgResearch where we were heartened to see the great work going on that will in time

greatly add to the efficiency of our farming systems. We were even lucky enough to have a dairy levypayer in attendance (all are welcome!) - hope you had a good day Neville!

At the Wishnowsky Monitor Farm, we are combining tracking the progress of the farm with practical tools you can take back and use at home - currently we have a strong focus on feed planning and are helping attendees learn simple techniques for better allocating feed, especially through these critical winter months. Come along and pick up some handy tips!

Ian Strahan is the chairman of the Finishing Group, and Emma Cooper (nee Wilkins) is the chair of the breeding group; you might like to get in touch with one of them if you have suggestions for the programmes.

Your local Farmer Council is responsible for allocating the bulk of the funding that goes into research and extension in our region, and they actively seek your feedback. Locally you can chat to Mel Poulton, Rob Kirk, Richard or Will Morrison, Mike Cranstone, Andrew Bendall, Steve Morris or Trevor Cook with your ideas.





# Totally Vets current stock health

## Dairy

Heifer mastitis in early lactation is not only a nuisance, it is also a permanent lifetime production loser. Of the options known to minimise heifer mastitis, teat-sealing four to six weeks before the planned start of calving is proven to be effective and economic. Training the heifers to the shed before the day of treatment makes the whole process an awful lot easier.

Those of you with an early calving start date will need to be setting a date to vaccinate your cows to protect your heifer replacements and bobbies from the ravages of rotavirus scours. Rotavec® Corona vaccine administration is recommended three to four weeks before the planned start of calving.

Many herds have been decimated by facial eczema. While the worst affected animals



HA HA

## Mildred

Mildred, the church gossip, and self-appointed monitor of the church's morals, kept sticking her nose into other people's business. Several members did not approve of her extra-curricular activities, but feared her enough to maintain their silence.

She made a mistake, however, accusing Frank, a new member, of being an alcoholic after she saw his old pick-up parked in front of the town's only bar one afternoon.

She emphatically told Frank (and several others) that everyone seeing it there would know what he was doing!

Frank, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just turned and walked away. He didn't explain; he said nothing.

Later that evening, Frank quietly parked his pickup in front of Mildred's house, walked home, and left it there all night.

## Lame weaner deer and necrobacillosis

Barney Askin

Necrobacillosis is a disease with many different presentations and hence names - footrot, lumpy jaw, necrotic stomatitis and hepatic necrobacillosis to give just a few. It is a disease that can result in abscess formation in any joint or part of the body.

The disease is caused by the bacterium *Fusobacterium necrophorum* which is found in the intestines of many animals. This bacterium survives well in manure-contaminated wet soil. The bacteria cannot penetrate intact skin and enter the body via cuts, damaged skin or via the mouth. Changes in the rumen, caused for example by grain overload, can also precipitate the disease. One of the commonest entry points is through feet that have been damaged during yarding and trucking.

Animals with the disease can present in different ways but are often depressed, thin, and rough-coated poor-doers. They can have a swollen face or jaw, be lame in single or multiple limbs and can sometimes have an infection in the throat leading to wheezing and possibly the development of pneumonia. Animals are sometimes found dead and when autopsied, these animals can have abscessation in multiple organs.

There is no licensed vaccine for the disease and it is almost certainly better to avoid the problem in the first place. Suggestions include avoiding rough surfaces especially sharp rocks and concrete; board yards where possible; keep yards as clean as possible; and use clean weaning paddocks. Avoiding pressure points in laneways, running small mobs, keeping weaners away from wire netting and minimising time in yards can also all play a part in reducing the incidence of the disease. Totally Vets is investigating the use of footbaths as a preventative measure.

Treatment is not that successful and to have any chance, cases need to be treated early. Animals with severe multiple lamenesses should be culled but in mild cases, early antibiotic therapy may be successful. Once there is multiple organ involvement, there is no chance of a successful outcome.



Totally Vets prints **Vet Notes** on paper using FSC certified mixed source pulp from Well Managed forests and other controlled sources. The paper is produced under an environmental management system ISO 14001.





have been culled, there may be some in the herd that are still suffering the effects. These will be cows that just fail to gain condition or even lose condition on a weight gain diet. These cows need to be separated, preferentially fed and given extra TLC over calving.

## Sheep & Beef

Good growing conditions often throw up 'unexpected' animal health issues on sheep and beef farms; recently we have been dealing with a number of cases of

unexplained deaths in both ewes and lambs.

Almost without exception for each farm, we have uncovered a different cause; so if you are losing stock, some post mortems would be well worth the investment to get to the bottom of the problem quickly and instigate prevention or treatment.

Scanning time is a good time to assess ewe condition and worm

level - a faecal egg count a week out from scanning will help decide whether any worm treatment is necessary at this time.

Remember to treat for lice off the shears if mid-winter shearing.

## Deer

For greatest accuracy, scan hinds 30 days after the stag was removed and before 120 days after the stag was introduced.



# The minimum requirements for beef cows

Trevor Cook

Even though breeding cows on hills are generally considered to be the flexible stock class on those hills, to not allow them to meet some minimum objectives consigns them to be low earners. Much of what we advise for ewes to increase their performance applies to cows as well.

Unlike ewes, for which the whole package of conception rate, lamb survival and lamb weaning weight contribute reasonably equally to their profitability, for cows their profit lies mostly in their reproductive performance. Weaning 300kg calves means little to no

profit if only 75 calves are weaned per 100 cows mated. For cows to be profitable, they must wean plenty of calves. If that is over 85 calves weaned per 100 cows mated then that herd's profit is largely in the bag.

By now the number of calves inside the cows is set so the total focus goes on maximising the survival of those calves. It just happens that the same feeding that maximises calf survival also supports a good lactation. Cow condition and feeding in the 3 to 4 weeks before calving is where the impact can be made. Not that it is possible to put condition on cows in the month before calving.

Before we get there though, it is quite okay to make cows work after weaning. In fact them losing some condition will increase their lifetime production. The problem with this message is how much condition can be taken off them. The objective is for them to calve in condition score 5 or more. Knowing how much condition they can lose over the winter should be driven by their required calving condition.

Sorting out the light ones that cannot lose any more condition and will produce more if they gain some condition needs to start early in the winter. This means drenching them and then allocating extra feed. We have seen dramatic responses to drenching light beef cows.

The other key to maximising beef cow performance without going overboard in how much feed is allocated to them, is feeding them enough to enable them to reach their maximum lactation height. The total amount of milk that they will produce is driven by how high the peak lactation is. For most herds, the majority of cows will be reaching peak lactation over the 2 or 3 weeks starting 60 days after calving begins. This spans the time when mating begins, so maximising the peak lactation will also maximise the conception rate.

These dates should be put in the diary. At this stage, it is putting in the calving date, coming back 30 days and then another entry 60 days after the start of calving. These then become prompts that hopefully will trigger some management actions.

# Calf-rearing - 5 days to weaning

Paul Wiseman

## COLOSTRUM STORAGE

Natural fermentation at ambient temperatures:

- Store in a cool place at 5°-15°C
- Use plastic or stainless steel containers with a lid
- Break the crust and stir twice daily to keep fermentation alive
- Use only clean water for cleaning and avoid detergents

DO NOT add extremely bloody colostrum, mastitis milk or milk treated with antibiotics.

Colostrum can be kept for up to three months if stored in this way. It is recommended to feed within two weeks as nutrient and antibody content and palatability decline after that time.

Bacterial inoculation of colostrum:

Colostrum can be preserved with yoghurt. This can be done by adding a dried packet of yoghurt like EasiYo® to the first batch of colostrum. Further containers of colostrum can be seeded with part of the initial batch.

## FEEDING

Suckling is important for healthy milk digestion. The calf should be fed standing with the head up. Drinking from buckets at ground level is not advised.

If using calf milk replacer (CMR), follow the instructions. Use one brand throughout the feeding programme. Any changes should be made slowly over three or more days.

Important management practices:

- Mix CMR just prior to feeding
- Store powder in a cool, dry area free of rodents and birds
- Mix thoroughly with warm water. Add powder to half the final volume, mix, then top up with water as required
- Milk is best fed at 18°-20°C
- Rinse equipment thoroughly after use with clean, fresh water
- Look for blocked teats, slow feeders, and bullying by other calves
- Use a compartmentalised feeder for the first three weeks so that each calf gets the same volume

Aim to feed 10% of the calf's body weight in milk per day, i.e. a 40kg calf gets 4L cows milk or 4 x 125g/L of CMR.

## RECOGNITION AND MANAGEMENT OF SICK CALVES

Carefully observe every day.

Healthy, happy calves will move around the pen, play, feed eagerly and stretch after getting up. They will have a shiny coat, bright eyes, wet noses, dry navels, and dry hind legs.

**Look:** recumbent, dull, sunken eyes, droopy ears, swollen wet navels, lameness, disorientation, separated, not playing, slow to feed, discharge (blood, mucous, pus) from the nose or mouth, hair loss.

**Listen:** grinding teeth, bellowing, coughing.

**Smell:** ammonia, milk, meal, hay, water.

**Taste:** colostrum, milk, feed, fibre and meal, salt, mould, metal, rust, sweet.

Isolate and treat sick calves as soon as possible. Spray pens of sick calves daily with a complete anti-viral spray.

The calf's temperature is influenced by ambient temperature. Take the temperature of a healthy pen mate before you take the temperature of a sick one for comparison. Generally a temperature greater than 39.5°C is considered hot.

Post mortems can be beneficial to rule in or out certain diseases. They can be done quickly and give good information.

Faecal sampling, dehydration levels and temperature results are also important.



## What's the goss?

**Corrina**, who had been with Totally Vets and Manawatu Vet Services for 9 years, has made her big move to the Taranaki with her partner **Greg**. Her 'C' theme farewell party at the Feilding clinic included all sorts of costumes including cow, clown, cook, candy cane, cop,

convict, cowboy, cowgirl, clairvoyant, Crusaders supporter, chimney sweep, cat, Captain Hook and Christmas elf. Nigel was delighted that he could still fit his school blazer and cricket pants from school (we weren't too sure about the Wallabies cap though)! It was a great night - we are delighted for Corrina, wish her all the best with her future and we'd like to think she could join the team again one day. She will be very missed.

Congratulations to **Jackie**, a very familiar face at reception, who has been appointed purchasing officer in Corrina's place. Jackie has been Corrina's back-up for several years and with a very thorough knowledge of the business and our clients, we know that Jackie will do an excellent job (her passion for netball and rugby is a bonus!). A warm welcome to vet nurses **Lucy Kellick** and **Carley Bennett** who



# Scanning to lambing

Trevor Cook

Just scanning ewes for their pregnancy status does not add value on its own unless pub talk is part of the farm value package. Selling dry ewes this year could be seen by some as all that is necessary as a scanning outcome to justify the 60 cents per ewe expense. But there is much more that can be made by using pregnancy scanning data.

Knowing the ewes that are carrying more than one lamb so that they can have special management is where most of the value of scanning is captured. Doing this can bring a 5 to 1 return on the scanning cost.

The production from multiple ewes is dependent on four major factors, three of which are between scanning and lambing. All of these factors can be managed.

**Body condition score (BCS).** This is the key to lamb survival and lamb growth rate. We know unequivocally that multiple ewes that lamb with a BCS less than 3 will have a lower lamb survival and will wean smaller lambs. Identifying light multiple ewes at scanning still leaves time to rescue them before lambing.

This means drafting them off at scanning, drenching them and feeding them more. To add a whole condition score requires 30kgDM over and above what is required for maintenance and pregnancy. In reality this can only happen in the 50 days after scanning which means that they need to consume over ½ kgDM extra each day. It can be done, but to do so requires that extra feed be available which is only likely if it has been planned for.

**Feed intake approaching lambing.** Multiple ewes that are underfed in the last 5 or 6 weeks of pregnancy will have a lower lamb survival and will wean lighter lambs. To avoid this does not mean allocating them heaps of feed. It means avoiding them losing any condition which means not grazing below 1100 kgDM/ha. Knowing the date from which this needs to happen so that plans can be put in place to allow that allocation is the key to

it happening. That sort of feed is not usually going to be available by chance at that time of the year.

**Adequate feed allocation at lambing.** Lambing these multiples on feed that does not fall below 1200kgDM/ha is the recipe for maximum lactation performance. Again, identifying that date and planning for it is the key to achieving it. The time of the year that ewes are lambing and the stocking rate are the two variables that determine what pasture covers ewes need to lamb onto. Generally the earlier that ewes are lambing, the higher the pasture covers that are required to lamb onto. Unfortunately the last two springs have not delivered higher pasture growth rates as the spring has progressed which has really disadvantaged later lambing flocks. This spring will be a cracker though.

The fourth area of impact on ewe performance is after lambing and is about **the quantity and quality of pasture that lambs in late lactation can graze.** As for all of the other factors, providing this sort of pasture needs to be planned for. Springs notoriously provided only the extremes in terms of too much or too little. Either of these can have a very negative impact on lamb weaning weights.

have joined the front office reception team - they replace Jackie and Kayla.

**Pete** has returned from a great three-month stint in Vietnam a few kilos lighter and is now getting prepared for his marriage to **Rosie** in July. **Anita** has joined the team out in Vietnam until July, incorporating some well deserved travelling on the way home. **Craig T** and his family hopped over there to attend the two-day

wedding ceremony of a Vietnamese translator - a great experience.

In the sporting arena, after doing the hard yards, **Joao's** son **Miguel** has been selected for the NZ U19 cycling team - well done Miguel, what an achievement! We wish you and the team all the best for your trips to Australia and Canada this year.

Right The Feilding clinic cow ridden by Corrina (cow), Hayley (clown) and a very sooty Catherine (chimney sweep)





# Transition time for dairy cows

Lindsay Rowe

The transition period is defined as the period from three weeks before calving until three weeks after calving.

This period is fundamental to the whole season's production and reproduction. Managed well, it can set the scene for top milk yields and maximum fertility. Managed poorly, it will limit potential production and adversely affect herd fertility.

The focus of transition management is to:

1. Physically prepare the cow for a change from the dry state to that of a lactating cow. The Golden Rule is to maintain appetite! During the last week prior to calving there is a natural decrease in the cow's intake - often by as much as 30% and it is occurring at a time when her requirement for energy is dramatically increasing. Dry Matter (DM):

intake in the two to three weeks pre-calving is the single most important factor in managing the transition cow. She requires at least 11-12kgDM of a high-quality ration daily through until calving. After calving, intakes must then become totally ad lib if cows are to perform to their potential.

2. Plan and manage feed carefully so as to avoid any sudden changes in the diet for the cow as she moves from the dry mob through to the springer mob (transition cow) into the colostrum mob and finally into the lactating herd. Done well, this will promote efficient rumen function and rapid recovery of full appetite.

3. Prevent hypocalcaemia (low blood calcium) over the calving period. Hypocalcaemia is a very significant problem in our lactating cows, milk fever being just the tip of the iceberg. Cows with low calcium levels are much more likely to experience other problems: calving trouble, retained foetal membranes, uterine infections, mastitis, lameness, reduction in appetite and ketosis.

The risk of cows experiencing these problems can be reduced by minimising the drop in the cow's blood calcium around calving through:

- Aiming for a near ad lib high-quality ration while keeping the level of lush green pasture in the ration pre-calving to a minimum - this will require the addition of maize silage and high-quality hay to the ration
- Ensuring that recommended levels of anionic salts are added to the ration in the period leading up to calving
- Using calcium-enriched drenches immediately after calving
- Adding lime flour and magnesium oxide to the post-calving diet

4. Prevent immune suppression over the transition period. The majority of disease in dairy cows occurs in the second half of the transition period when the cow's natural defence mechanism is reduced following insufficient energy and protein intakes. Working hard to maintain intake through the transition period is then crucial if the risk of disease is to be minimised. Ensuring that a surplus of trace minerals is available is also critical at this time, as it is thought trace minerals may be able to boost the immune system.

# ROTAVEC ... timing is everything!

Leisa Norris-Spring

Rotavec® Corona vaccination is a significant investment and well worth it when compared to facing the debilitating effects of rotavirus scours outbreak!

Vaccination of pregnant cows gives passive protection to the calf via antibodies in the colostrum and milk to protect against rotavirus, corona virus and *E. coli*, three of

the primary causes of calf scours in the first weeks of life. To ensure maximum benefit from your investment, there are several important points to consider:

## TIMING OF VACCINATION

Vaccination needs to be done 3 to 12 weeks pre-calving. Plan to vaccinate your herd 3 weeks before planned start of calving. This will mean all cows calving in the first 9 weeks are covered, and will produce the vital high levels of colostral antibodies that are needed. This gives a 9-week 'vaccination window' which is vital to ensuring the economic and clinical success of vaccinating; outside of this 9-week span, antibody levels from the vaccine will be markedly reduced.

## COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT

For the best result, newborn calves must get 2-2.5 litres of immediate post-calving colostrum (i.e. from the FIRST milking from a cow) from the vaccinated cow within 6-12 hours of birth when intestinal absorption is at its best and colostrum antibodies are at their highest. They then need 2.5-3 litres of stored or fresh colostrum daily during the first 2-3 weeks (longer if possible) to provide local protection at gut level. Colostrum from the first two milkings contains by far the most antibodies, and rotavirus antibodies courtesy of the vaccination, so it makes sense to ensure newborn calves get this colostrum. Although 'another thing to do' at such a busy time, the practice of milking freshly calved cows separately from the other colostrum cows and storing separately is a worthwhile practice.

# Growing Great Heifers - a real time update

Craig Tanner

Research tells us that better-grown dairy heifer replacements (of breed and bodyweight equivalence) that reach and maintain critical targets will:

- be healthier
- reach puberty sooner
- conceive faster as yearlings and calve more quickly as 2yo's
- produce more milk in their 1st lactations & over their lifetimes
- get back in calf as 2yo's
- have high survivability to 3yo's and beyond

With the index mob of 90 2008-spring-born heifers enrolled in Totally Vets' **Growing Great Heifers** program now approaching the end of their 1st lactation, how do some of the important numbers stack up?

## 1. Liveweight (LWT) for age and rates of average daily gain (ADG) over SIX weigh sessions

### SUMMARY TABLE: 2008-BORN HEIFERS

LWT date	Apr-09	May-09	Jul-09	Oct-09	Feb-10	May-10
Ave LWT	183	217	240	308	413	463
Max	229	267	287	368	486	536
Min	133	159	169	237	315	343
Days		41	56	93	138	70
ADG		0.84	0.41	0.73	0.76	0.71

- almost 200kg difference in LWT @ 22mo with any effect of breed likely to be minimal in this instance
- overall average daily gain was 0.70kg/day from Apr '09 to May '10
- average LWT were consistently below target for age by about 5%

## 2. Milk production and reproduction analysis

Three groups were created based on LWT at 22mo of age (May 2010): top 25%, 50% around median and bottom 25%.

	2008-born heifers	Top 25%	Median	Bottom 25%	Target
<b>General</b>	No.	21	40	21	
	LWT range May '10 (kg)	493 - 536	444 - 492	343 - 443	
	Ave age (months)	31.7	31.6	31.2	
	Ave BW	94	95	58	
	Ave PW	92	92	24	
<b>Calving</b>	3 wk calving	90%	55%	70%	> 75%
	6 wk calving	95%	82.5%	95%	95%
<b>Mating</b>	21d submission	95%	73%	80%	90%
	% Preg in 1st 8.5 wks	71%	67.5%	60%	88%
	% repro status unknown	9.5%	5%	5%	
	% MT	14%	5%	10%	< 8%
<b>Production</b>	Ave DIM	241	234	236	
	Ave litres STD (Mar '11)	3748	3432	3186	
	Ave litres as % herd ave litres	99.5%	91%	84.6%	
<b>Financial</b>	Ave \$\$\$ earned per heifer @ \$6.90/kgMS	\$2070	\$1900	\$1725	

- 3 groups of similar average age, although the bottom group did include the youngest animals
- Average BW & PW significantly lower for the bottom group Top group calved quickest (90% @ 3wks) contributing most DIM (ave 241), submitted quickest for AI (95% @ 21d) and conceived to give best 8.5 wk in-calf rate (71%)

There was a gross financial benefit to heifers being heavier through extra MS and DIM.

The net benefit will almost always be strongly positive (\$\$\$) when full account is taken of production, reproduction and survivability advantages/disadvantages as well as extra feed costs for extra LWT and MS.

2009 and 2010-born heifers are being weighed and monitored as part of the ongoing programme. Both groups are tracking ahead of the 2008-born group so their respective performances will be anticipated with interest.

Whether for financial motives or purely a sense of pride in knowing that your heifers have the opportunity to express their genetic potential, successful heifer-rearing is part of the process of continuous improvement in farm productivity.

**Totally Vets** has developed a total heifer-rearing action, advice and support package that includes:

- Estimation of mature LWT of your heifers - either from LW breeding values (BV) or by weighing 6-8 yo cows
- Weighing service - both heifers and cows
- Management, feeding and husbandry advice
- Specific disease control advice
- Tailored mating strategies
- Reporting

**Totally Vets is keen to be involved at any or all of the 'measure, plan, do, review' stages of Growing Great Heifers. Talk to us today!**



# Rumensin

**Increased energy available to the cow:**

- Increased milk production
- Aids in the control of ketosis
- Increased rate of weight gain and promotes earlier onset of oestrus in replacement heifers
- Aids in the reduction of bloat
- Coccidiosis prevention

**One of the most researched products in the world with over 2300 papers**

# WIN A FABULOUS HOLIDAY ON US!

**EXCLUSIVE TO TOTALLY VETS**

**Purchase qualifying Merial Ancare product during May and June and go into the draw to win a \$2500 TRAVEL VOUCHER.**



PROUDLY AVAILABLE FROM AND EXCLUSIVE TO TOTALLY VETS

Merial is the Animal Health subsidiary of sanofi-aventis.  
 MERIAL, ANCARE, LEVEL 3, MERIAL BUILDING, OSTERLEY WAY, MANUKAU CITY, NEW ZEALAND. \*EPRINEX, \*ECLIPSE, \*GENESIS, \*FIRST, MATRIX AND \*EXODUS ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF MERIAL LIMITED. REGISTERED PURSUANT TO THE ACVM ACT 1997, NOS. A7191, A9270, A7353, A8228, A9886, A1008, A6889, A9090 & A9822. ©COPYRIGHT 2010 MERIAL LIMITED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Please see Totally Vets for further details.