



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

NOVEMBER 2011



## Totally Vets Clients & Staff Christmas BBQ

Join us on:

**Friday 9 December**

At:

**Feilding Clinic  
25 Manchester Street  
Feilding**

&/or

**Awapuni Clinic  
189 Pioneer Highway  
Palmerston North**

Sometime between noon till late!

**We would love to see you.**



“The need to improve reproductive performance is a high priority for New Zealand’s dairy farmers. An industry target of achieving a 6-week in-calf rate of 78% by 2015 is established in the ‘Strategic Framework for Dairy Farming’s Future’. (Tim Mackle, CEO DairyNZ)

To achieve this, dairy farmers and their advisers need a process with support material that provides:

- Improved fertility performance measures and monitoring
- An agreed knowledge base and approach using improved skills
- Planning for improved fertility

The vision that came from the Australian InCalf project, “To enable dairy farmers to achieve measured improvement in herd reproductive performance” is equally applicable in New Zealand for dairy farmers seeking to improve their reproductive performance towards industry targets.

InCalf has since developed and rolled out an impressive extension programme, which includes The InCalf Book, Fertility Focus report, Herd Assessment Pack, and InCalf training for farmers and advisers. InCalf found that change for the better does not necessarily

follow provision of information; there needs to be a process that engages and supports the farmer into taking action.

In both Australia and New Zealand, farmers indicated that they needed a supporting process to bring about real improvement in their herds. Farmers need to be able to:

- Assess the current reproductive performance in their herd
- Assess their scope for improvement and the likely benefits
- Determine their options for change
- Implement their chosen changes

Through a Memorandum of Understanding, DairyNZ and some New Zealand veterinary practices, including Totally Vets, have agreed to collaborate on increasing the awareness, uptake and adoption of InCalf principles by dairy farmers. The expected outcomes are:

- Economic gains through improved production and fewer empty cows
- Streamlined breeding management systems, reducing stress
- Less reliance on hormonal interventions, providing improved animal welfare and assurance of market acceptability for dairy products.

**To learn how Totally Vets and InCalf can lift the reproductive performance in your herd, ask your vet or DairyNZ adviser.**



# Totally Vets current stock health

## Dairy

Keep an eye on cycling cows and be prepared to intervene or contact us if submission rates are not where they should be.

Continue with magnesium supplementation - with the change in grass composition associated with the fast spring growth,

we are seeing a number of cows with metabolic issues.

Look after calves turned out on paddocks and being weaned. Cases of coccidiosis in pre-weaner calves have been noted. Ideally, continue to use a calf meal with a suitable coccidiostat and be sure to take quick action by contacting us if calves are not thriving as expected.



HA HA

## Five-minute management course

### LESSON 2:

A sales rep, an administration clerk, and the manager are walking to lunch when they find an antique oil lamp. They rub it and a Genie comes out. The Genie says, "I'll give each of you just one wish."

"Me first! Me first!" says the admin clerk. "I want to be in the Bahamas, driving a speedboat, without a care in the world." Poof! She's gone.

"Me next! Me next!" says the sales rep. "I want to be in Hawaii, relaxing on the beach with my personal masseuse, an endless supply of Pina Colodas, and the love of my life." Poof! He's gone.

"OK, you're up," the Genie says to the manager. The manager says, "I want those two back in the office after lunch."

Moral of the story: always let your boss have the first say.

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## Manawatu ewe scanning results 2011

Greta Baynes

Thank you to those farmers who provided their ewe-scanning information to us this year. We aim to send our survey out each year to create a growing database from which we can identify trends and investigate opportunities to improve the number of lambs born each year.

Hogget-scanning results varied from 44% to 140% with most hovering in the early 90s. As expected, the two-tooths did better and ranged from 65 to 193% with over three-quarters scanning 134% or better. The mixed-aged ewes averaged 160% with the best mob doing 203% and the worst just below 100%.

### Local scanning results

	Ewes	Two-tooths	Hoggets
Overall	152%	138%	87%
Scanned for triplets	176%	165%	95%
Scanned for multiples	158%	145%	74%
Scanned wet-dry	122%	104%	91%

The average over all farms, all classes, was 130%. Comments from farmers were resoundingly similar with lower scanning rates than normal, with more dries and less twins. Many were disappointed with their hogget results and there have been many anecdotal cases of hogget abortions after scanning. A number of these have been investigated with a variety of results.

We aim to continue this survey each year to monitor trends and attempt to identify factors that limit or boost scanning results. One thing you can consider doing now is identify ewes less than body-condition score 2.5 at weaning and managing them separately to ensure the bulk of ewes are over that magic 3 at tupping. This can improve scanning by up to 25%.

**If you are unsure how to condition score, please get in touch with us - we have an easy to follow document with pictures to assist you.**





Cases of bloat have been reported and many farms have already put preventative treatment in place. Make sure your staff know what to do and are equipped to deal with bloat emergencies.

## Sheep & Beef

Consider now the amount of Toxovax you will need - due to the very short shelf-life of the product, this has to be pre-ordered at least 4 weeks before delivery. One dose for life to all

maiden ewes and it should be given 6 weeks prior to tupping.

Parasite management in lambs - work with your vet to create a tailored programme. Keep up your flystrike prevention and consider using a longer-acting product to minimise extra mustering (read: pneumonia risk).

100kg weaner bull calves need special care in the early weeks after arrival - a check at

this time often sets them back for the whole season; you don't want to be trying to play catch-up once feed quality deteriorates in summer and early autumn. The investment in few weeks' worth of meal to help them through this period is well worth it, even in very good growing seasons. As with lambs, check with your vet that your worm drenching programme is appropriate, as there are a lot more options around now than there were even 5 years ago.



## Pink eye in cattle

Paul Wiseman

Pink eye results in economic losses when it occurs as an outbreak due to reduced weight gain or even weight loss in calves. Affected animals suffer considerable pain and distress. It is a common, highly contagious eye disease of cattle of all ages, particularly calves.



The primary cause of pink eye is *Moraxella bovis*, but the severity of the disease is influenced by the

presence of other micro-organisms. Flies are mainly responsible for the spread of infection, while carrier animals are important reservoirs of infection within a herd.

Damage to the cornea, most commonly due to the effects of UV light, dust or pollen, is the main predisposing factor. Pink eye most commonly occurs in dusty conditions over the summer, but can occur at any time of the year. Other factors may be involved including increased physical damage due to seed head in pasture. White-faced calves are more prone and stocking rate can have an effect.

Affected animals dislike light, blink and weep a lot from one or both eyes. Initially the lesions are central corneal ulcers that rapidly enlarge and are invaded by blood vessels from the white of the eye - hence the name pink eye. The ulcers may become purulent. Healing leaves a scar on the cornea that can permanently impair vision. In a small number of cases, the cornea can rupture.

Treatment involves the use of antibiotics. Severe cases benefit from covering the eyes with a patch or by temporary surgical closure of the eyelids.

Pink eye is best prevented by controlling flies and environmental predisposing factors. Vaccination is possible as a preventative measure or, less effectively, for the management of an outbreak of disease.

Pink eye has a long incubation period - up to 3 weeks from exposure to showing signs, though it can be as short as 3 days. Some animals can be incubating the disease before or at the time of vaccination or soon after. Some will be exposed to an infective dose before development of a sufficiently strong immune response.

Mixing of animals with other mobs, be it clinical cases, healed eyes, or apparently unaffected animals from mobs where active infection has been present, is best avoided, even if un-infected mobs have been vaccinated.

Vaccination is best completed 3-6 weeks before challenge, which is usually late spring/early summer. Vaccination can be from one week of age and consists of a single-dose vaccine. As with any vaccine, there is a range of immune response between individuals, with some animals having less protection than others following vaccination. Allow calves to settle in for a few days before vaccinating and keep new animals separate from other stock for at least 3 weeks.

**For prevention, control and treatment options of pink eye in your herd, contact your vet at Totally Vets.**



## Growing good young stock...

Lindsay Rowe

...is like putting money in the bank - the more you put in during the whole rearing period, the more you will get paid out.

Replacement heifers are the most valuable asset on the farm, representing the best genetic material and carrying the future production potential of your herd; they are also often the most neglected, despite the \$1000+ cost of bringing them into the herd as a two year-old.

NZ survey data estimate that 30% of replacement heifers are below target-mating weights in October, which leads to:

Increased wastage: only 67% of calves identified as replacements for the herd may calve as three-year olds, meaning there is a 33% loss rate between rearing and completion of the first lactation. The lighter the heifer, the greater the chance she will be lost from the herd.

Production losses: a heifer that is 10% below target liveweight can be expected to produce 9kgMS less in her first lactation. The closer a heifer is to her calving weight target, the more milk she will produce in her first lactation - every extra kg of liveweight is worth an extra seven litres of milk.

Reproductive failure: the major influence on the onset of puberty for yearlings is liveweight, so the lower the average liveweight, the greater the proportion of late or empty heifers. Light-weight heifers are five times more likely to be empty than the heaviest heifers in the group.

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

Liveweight targets are best calculated as a percentage of the liveweight of your mature herd. These are minimum target weights and require an average growth rate of 0.6kg EVERY day for the total rearing period or 20kg per month.

Mature liveweight (kg)	6 months	Mating	Calving
	30%	60%	90%
400 (Jersey)	120	240	360
450 (J x F)	135	270	405
500 (Friesian)	150	300	450

To achieve these growth rates, management needs to focus on:

Efficient calf-rearing through to weaning.

Generous dry matter intakes after weaning allowing for maintenance, liveweight gain and then pregnancy, especially the last 4 months.

High-quality feed - energy (ME), protein % and digestibility.

An efficient worm-control programme.

Trace element sufficiency (copper, cobalt and selenium levels).

Appropriate disease control and vaccination status.

**Ask your vet about the Totally Vets Growing Great Heifers programme - it will help you to produce replacement heifers capable of lifting the overall performance of your herd.**

## What's the goss?

A huge well done to **Diane White** for completing her first half-marathon on 9 October in Masterton, in a time of

2hrs22min! From not having run any distance since school, Di has built up to the 21.1km over the past 6 months. On moving to the 42.2km marathon distance, she says "there's no way I'm going onto to doing a full marathon - not having seen what state the marathon runners were in as they crossed the finish line". Watch this space...

On the subject of sport, Totally Vets once again has two teams in this year's BNZ Workplace Challenge which runs for five weeks from 31 October. **Kayla, Charmaine, Christine, Lindsay, Aimee, Peg, Anita, Lucy, Leisa** and **Ginny** will all be recording how many minutes of sport/activity they do each day, with the aim of beating other teams in the Manawatu.

# NAIT update

Greta Baynes

Several new tagging requirements have been discussed over the recent months with a variety of companies involved. Most of the deadlines have been shifted but clear guidelines are now emerging.

A National Animal Identification and Tracing (NAIT) scheme is being developed to identify and trace cattle and deer. This scheme will link people, property and livestock providing lifetime traceability to help New Zealand maintain its reputation as a premium producer of primary produce.

Further to meeting these requirements, electronic tags allow farmers to make management choices with great ease that will improve decision-making around genetics, replacement selection, adequacy of feeding, treatment history and much more.

The NAIT law is expected to be passed in early 2012 and with this, RFID tagging will be mandatory from 1 July 2012 for cattle and 1 March 2013 for deer.

What you can do now:

- Begin tagging all young stock, especially calves with NAIT-approved radio-frequency identification (RFID) ear tags. A NAIT-approved RFID tag is now an optional

primary tag for cattle (of any age) for movements other than to slaughter

What you must do once the law is in place:

- Register with NAIT - voluntary from February 2012, but once the law has passed, it will be mandatory
  - Register farm or property
  - Register PICA (Person In Charge of Animals) who will be responsible for registering animal data online and reporting stock movements and deaths
- Tag cattle (and later deer) with NAIT-approved RFID ear tags
  - Secondary tags will be required for all animals except those going directly to slaughter
- Register your NAIT-tagged cattle (and deer)
- Record any deaths of NAIT-tagged animals with NAIT
- Report all stock movements (via phone, internet or via a NAIT-approved information provider of your choice - Totally Vets is investigating becoming a provider)
  - To or from other properties, including off-farm grazing
- Animals going direct-to-slaughter
  - Bobby calves require only a meat processor issued 'direct to slaughter' tag
  - NAIT-approved RFID tag for all other cattle

Stock movements to NAIT-accredited sale yards and meat processors will not be required to be recorded by farmers sending the stock. This will be done on their behalf by the NAIT-accredited entities.

The RFID tag is a passive tag that reacts when the scanner sends a signal to it. It does not hold any information other than a 16-digit code. The surface of the tag is marked with this number and your AHB number or participant code.

If you are not looking at purchasing a scanner to read the RFID tag, you may find it difficult to read the small print in the hairy ears of some animals. To get around this, a large panel secondary tag with a visible number can be linked to the RFID primary tag.

While the NAIT scheme will be web-based, there will be other options for you to carry out some of your NAIT obligations. There will be a paper-based option for movement recording for farmers who do not have reliable internet. Charges will apply for this option whereas using the internet option will be free.

There are numerous opportunities to grasp with this technology and utilizing it could well improve your farm profitability. Make the most of it!

**Look out for a direct mail insert in your mailbox from NAIT, giving an update on the NAIT scheme in the coming weeks. Remember for the most up-to-date information, you can visit the NAIT website at [www.nait.co.nz](http://www.nait.co.nz).**



At the time of writing, very creative **Eliza** and **Pip** are busy planning **Greta's** leaving do - a boot-scootin' hoedown - as she heads West to join her fiancé **Jeff** in the Taranaki. With a 'rodeo ring' and other Western-type activities planned, the party promises to be a great night! No doubt there will be some 'good' and 'interesting' pictures to follow.

**Joao** is now back with us from Vietnam, where he picked up a few nicknames from the Vietnamese during his three months there - 'Uncle Joao' and 'Master of work and life' - impressive! **Craig T** has arrived there with his family and won't be back in the Manawatu until February/ March next year.

Finally, congratulations on **Emma** and **Marcel Scott** on the birth of **Luke Reid Scott**, 9lb10oz, on Monday 10th October. This was absolutely perfect timing for siblings **Aston** and **Hannah** who had all the school holidays to 'play' with him!

# Why neuter your working dogs?

Helen Sheard

Historically working dogs haven't been desexed for two reasons: to see if they will be good workers and potential breeding stock; and the belief that they will become 'lazy' after neutering.

The former is certainly true, but the latter has no scientific backing, and neutering can offer many advantages - in both the health of your dogs and with management issues.

Pet dogs are usually desexed at 6 months of age but there is no reason why we can't neuter working dogs later in life, after they have proven themselves to be superb dogs or merely average. As long as they are otherwise healthy, we are happy to do routine desexing up to 6 years of age.

## ADVANTAGES OF DESEXING BITCHES

- Bitches won't come on heat - so no mismatings, and less bitches on heat means less time shut up or being watched like a hawk. And once one bitch comes on heat all the others tend to follow!
- Mammary tumours are less common in spayed bitches
- Less time lost with bitches out of work due to unwanted pregnancies
- No risk of pyometra
- No false pregnancies or vaginal prolapses
- Risk of constipation is reduced - bitches that are prone to constipation often get worse at the time of heat
- No mismating injections - the cost of mismating drugs is now very high - around \$240 for a 20kg bitch

Females have a different metabolic rate after desexing and may put on weight more easily - this might be a benefit for some of those dogs that are hard to keep condition on! If they are already 'good do-ers', then simply be prepared to feed less.

Older bitches (>8 years) that get in pup are more at risk of developing whelping problems - uterine inertia (lack of

contractions), dead pups, milk fever etc.

Bitches that have been accidentally mated can still be desexed in early pregnancy, four weeks after they have finished their heat.

## ADVANTAGES OF DESEXING DOGS

- Reduced risk of prostate disease and testicular tumours
- Reduced risk of constipation due to enlarged prostate
- Reduced territorial aggression, fewer bite wounds

Young, healthy male dogs can be neutered any time.

## DISADVANTAGES

- While we take every care, there is always some risk associated with general anaesthetics and surgery
- The desexing procedure is irreversible - so no going back!
- Convalescence following surgery - bitches and dogs will both need to be rested for 10 days following surgery until the sutures are removed.

If you have any questions about desexing or other health matters, please feel free to contact us at the Feilding clinic.



# A horse is a horse of course!

Leisa Norris

A year or two ago now, Totally Vets responded to client suggestions to separate out our

equine articles from Vetnotes, our primarily production animal oriented newsletter and to produce a separate publication for our equine clients - Vetnotes Equine & Lifestyle.

Although this remains the case, and many of you out there may not be that into horses, we did think that a quick reminder of what our

awesome equine team can do may be in order ... so, for those of you that do have an 'old nag that's good for nothing but dog tucker', a 'paddock-pugging expensive kid's best friend', or even a 'future Melbourne Cup Winner' around the place, you may be interested in what equine services Totally Vets currently offers.

All of our large animal veterinarians are on hand and are capable equine general



# Looking forward to weaning!

**Ginny Dodunski**

This time last year, we were very much in 'survival' mode. Ewes were very light, and a difficult winter was followed by the worst and wettest September anyone can remember!

Thankfully we have been in a better position feed-wise this spring, but as usual it's not all plain sailing.

## EWES

Looking back at the winter and early spring, a real feature was how variable feed levels were between farms, and this will be reflected in ewe condition under that wool out there.

Some farms will be in a position of still needing to put significant weight back on ewes, while others will be in quite a comfortable position. But even within those better conditioned flocks there will be individuals that need to be separated and managed for weight gain after weaning.

The scientists tell us that ewes are more efficient at gaining weight while they are

still lactating, but in practice this does seem difficult to achieve and thin ewes are usually better off weaned - especially the young ewes.

Draft off the light ewes at weaning, drench them with a highly effective combination drench and give them some better feed. Doing this at every opportunity throughout the summer can really reduce that tail of the flock that pulls overall performance down.

Any ewes that were given a capsule or long-acting moxidectin injection pre-lamb should have an exit drench at weaning. Talk to your vet about this.

Be aware too that last year's facial eczema (FE) season will continue to impact on ewe flocks for years to come, and thin ewes that don't respond to a drench could be going down with pre-existing liver damage. A lot of the ewes that get skinny with Johne's disease do so around weaning too. We can do some quick post mortems for you to assess the main causes of skinny ewes in your flock and help you pinpoint areas where changes could improve flock performance.

An obvious one is FE tolerance, and boy, a lot of potential performance can get wiped out in a decent FE outbreak; adding FE tolerance to your genetics shopping basket has got to make sense in much of our district. Even in years where we don't see outbreaks, many ewes are getting subclinical doses of the FE toxin, which can become cumulative year after year.

As I write this, the forecasters are talking about another La Niña year, so if it happens, look out for another bad FE season.

## LAMBS

Management of lambs after weaning is all about good feed!

However the better fed they are, the more important it is to have your 5-in-1 vaccination programme right. Pulpy kidney incidence sky rockets when lambs are growing fast! But it's totally preventable, so no excuses really.

A note on this - every year we see deaths in mobs of weaned lambs, that turn out to be all sorts of things. Often the first thing people do is reach for the 5-in-1 vaccination, which may help, but usually the most effective approach is to get some post mortems done early, so we can nail down the cause and get you onto the right course of action from the start.

There are big productivity costs to using a drench that is ineffective or only partially effective in your lambs. Last year in particular, we found some startlingly bad drench testing results on a number of local farms. While the results were a bit scary, with all the science we've got access to now and the newer drench options in the mix, we were able to put together plans for these farms that will help lift their productivity and preserve drench efficacy.

**So if you don't know the efficacy of the various drenches at your place, now is a good time to start talking to your vet about finding out.**

practitioners who can attend day-to-day ambulatory calls such as vaccinations, basic lameness, and blood sampling. They can also attend more urgent calls like accidents, wound stitch ups and colic when and if required, knowing that they have back-up from those Totally Vets veterinarians whose focus is almost solely on the horse.

Barry, Katie, Peg, Lucy or Joao may not always be immediately available because

they're kept rather busy with more complex equine services such as:

- Lameness examinations
- Reproductive services (AI, pregnancy scanning etc)
- Poor performance problems
- Full dentistry services
- Pre-purchase examinations

- Nutritional advice
- General health checks
- and even clipping!!!

So don't hesitate to contact Totally Vets for advice and/or care when it comes to your horse(s)! We have a hugely experienced, dedicated and friendly team ready to help if and when you need...

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