



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM FEBRUARY 2012



Above: Enjoy the sunshine and cherish good friends

Happy 2012 to all our clients!

It was great to see so many of you at our Christmas BBQs at the Feilding and Palmerston North branches on the 9th December. This is always a lovely opportunity to catch up with you all over some festive food and drink.

The world's population has doubled in the last 44 years! Food prices keep rising. Globally farm land is increasingly under pressure. Volatility is as constant as death and taxes. Volatility brings opportunities for those who are aware; are prepared to close the gaps; are capable of change; and have financial reserves.

Planning, doing and reviewing is a never-ending cycle.

A golden opportunity The annual animal health review

Paul Wiseman

Planning ahead is something few of us do particularly well. Some even believe planning is a waste since we cannot forecast the unpredicted big change event. While it's easy to blame the weather or the government for our 'bad luck', there are others out there succeeding as we mumble about those lucky !@#\$\$%^&*.

The impending hit many farmers may suffer when this year's provisional tax coincides with a high terminal tax demand due to reduced provisional tax last year is not a black swan event. It is an entirely predictable and hopefully well managed event. Planning for and reviewing optimal animal performance and profitability is as important to success as the actual doing.

The necessity to comply with the legalities imposed on both vets and farmers for an annual authorisation of restricted veterinary medicines is accepted by most. Use this opportunity to ask about the things that concern you.

Ask your vet to help identify factors that may be influencing milk quality. If you have signed up to Infovet, we can give you an estimated incidence of clinical mastitis as well as interpret your bulk tank somatic cell counts. Numerous other benefits of high-quality milk are listed in Anita's article on page 5.

Reproductive performance kicks off next season's production. Your Focus on Fertility Report (FFR) is a great way to identify areas for improvement. Your herd's overall performance is measured by the 6-week in-calf rate and empty rate. The drivers of this performance, submission rate and conception rate, plus key indicators to areas for improvement, against InCalf achievable targets for New Zealand are all there on the FFR. We can explain the FFR and offer a pathway to improvement.

The annual animal health review is a golden opportunity to discuss one-on-one numerous animal health issues. This includes the significance of your Bulk Milk BVD results, clarifying vaccination schedules, achieving heifer replacement targets, how to find out why you have so many lame cows, and the list goes on.





Totally Vets current stock health

Dairy

Cull cows based on somatic cell count, empties, production, and temperament.

Pregnancy test - it's too late for a preg-test 13 weeks after-mating start date. To achieve the maximum from a herd PT, arrange it six weeks after mating ended. Book early!

Monitor facial eczema spores and administer zinc or spray pastures. Check out www.totallyvets.co.nz for the latest regional spore counts.

Check the mineral status of your calves. They will have run out of mum's supplies by now.

Weigh young stock - at 6 months their



HA HA

Five-minute management course

LESSON 4:

A turkey was chatting with a bull. 'I would love to be able to get to the top of that tree' sighed the turkey, 'but I haven't got the energy.'

'Well, why don't you nibble on some of my droppings?' replied the bull. It's full of nutrients.'

The turkey pecked at a lump of dung, and found it actually gave him enough strength to reach the lowest branch of the tree.

The next day, after eating some more dung, he reached the second branch.

Finally after a fourth night, the turkey was proudly perched at the top of the tree.

He was promptly spotted by a farmer, who shot him out of the tree.

Moral of the story: Bull shit might get you to the top, but it won't keep you there...

Working dogs - first aid for skin wounds

Helen Sheard

Large skin wounds can be par for the course for working dogs - fences, sticks and cow-induced injuries are common. First aid out in the field greatly increases the chances of the wound healing well.

Once a flap of skin is hanging loose, both the flap and the area it came from are prone to contamination and drying out.

First aid: gently wash the wound with water if there is obvious dirt there. Jumping in a dirty trough is not a good idea.

Cover the wound with a clean shirt or anything you have to hand. Don't let them run home -

contamination with seed heads and dirt means the wound will take longer to clean - which means longer anaesthetic time, and higher risk of infection.

The fresher a wound is when it is sutured, the more likely it will heal well, so give us a ring as soon as you can so we can organise a time for you to come to the small animal clinic in Feilding.

Wounds in the groin often take the longest to heal - the area is under tension every time the leg moves, and the flap of skin can act like a bellows, sucking air in through the wound.

If a wound is already grossly contaminated then often we won't stitch it straight away - severely bruised or damaged tissue can die back and will slough off. These wounds need to be flushed and bandaged until all the tissue is looking healthy enough to surgically close.

Totally vets friendly staff at Feilding or Palmerston North can help you put together a canine first aid kit suitable for those inevitable accidents.



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.



CERTIFIED MIXED PULP



WOOD FIBRE FROM SUSTAINABLE FOREST



CHLORINE FREE



ISO 14001 CERTIFIED



ARCHIVAL



liveweight should be 30% of what their mature weight will be.

Set yourself up for a successful mating this year. Have Totally Vets body-condition score your herd and develop some strategies to have the light cows in better condition at calving.

Sheep & Beef

Lamb and calf growth rates on permanent pasture have plummeted with the decline in

quality of the feed that grew and grew in late spring. We have been seeing a number of different animal health issues related to this.

In sheep, Barber's Pole worm cases have been seen on some properties already, just proving that it likes to defy conventional wisdom regarding the onset of its 'season'! Those of you who subscribe to our new fortnightly alert service 'In the Loop' will

have heard about this in early January, when we also provided tips and advice for monitoring and deciding when to treat. To subscribe, give Pip a call at the clinic.

Finally this is a great year to perform a faecal egg count reduction test in both sheep and cattle. It is easy to get the egg counts we need to start the test, and on most properties we still have a good mixture of worm species present to ensure valid and useful results.



A quick guide to hogget mating

Barny Askin

As with most things in farming, there are pros and cons to hogget mating but with current lamb prices the way they are, and capital stock numbers low, it seems like a good time to make the most of this opportunity.

The pros include increased lambs sold, increased lifetime performance of ewes and higher flock fertility, and more efficient utilisation of spring feed. The cons can include poorer performing two-tooth ewes if not done well, higher death rate in lambing hoggets, extra feed consumed from July to February and reduced wool at hogget and two-tooth shearings. These all

need to be weighed up and a decision made as to whether hogget mating suits your particular system.

If hoggets are to be mated, it is important to use best practice to optimise the performance of this stock class both by way of increasing the number of hogget lambs weaned and not impacting negatively on the performance of two-tooths the subsequent year.

Below is a list of 'best practice' procedures that should help optimise the performance of this group:

- Ensure hoggets to be mated are selected early, become a priority stock class and are correctly vaccinated against *Campylobacter* and for toxoplasmosis (see article in December VetNotes). This should achieve a 5% lift in scanning on average.
- Select replacements early and feed preferentially to achieve optimum weights for mating. Aim for 40kg and remember that each 1kg liveweight above 36kg increases lambing percentage by 2%. Target growth rates from teaser introduction onwards should be 100g/day.

- Use of a teaser from 17 days prior to 'ram in' means that more of the hoggets are in their second cycle by the time they are mated. The second cycle is more fertile and scanning percentage will increase as a consequence. Hoggets are often mated for only one of two cycles so this is all important.
- Ensure teasers are vasectomised well in advance of use (at least 3 weeks) and hoggets are toxo-vaxed a minimum of one month prior to teaser joining.
- Mate hoggets separately to mature ewes and use adult ram ratios of 1:80 or hogget ram ratios of 1:50. This is because hogget rams have smaller sperm reserves than adult rams. We recommend using adult rams when possible.
- Mate hoggets in easier country in smaller paddocks. Hoggets are shy breeders so this will increase their chance of being mated.
- Watch out for Barber's Pole and drench appropriately if conditions are favourable.
- Ensure hoggets have booster and sensitiser doses of 5-in-1 so they are fully immune and maximum effect will be achieved from a pre-lamb 5-in-1 booster.

From weaning to mating

Leisa Norris

Looking after your youngsters is looking after your future!

Reproductive performance of replacement heifers is directly related to liveweight at mating and calving. You need to provide them with the best opportunity to calve on time in the first and subsequent years. Replacement heifers are your future and investing a little time and energy into them now will reap reward in the long term.

The following extract from a client's Focus on Fertility Report demonstrates what can be achieved with well grown heifers. How does

Key indicators to areas for improvement

Calving pattern of first calvers			Calving pattern of whole herd				Pre-mating heats		
Well managed heifers get in calf quickly and calve early.			Did late calvers reduce in-calf rates?				A high % of well managed cows will cycle before the start of mating.		
Calved by	Week 3	Week 6	Calved by	Week 3	Week 6	Week 9	Your herd		
Your herd	86%	96%	Your herd	68%	86%	99%	Aim above	85%	
Aim above	75%	92%	Aim above	60%	87%	98%			
	*****	*****		*****	*****	*****			

3-week submission rate of first calvers			Heat detection			Non-cycling cows			
Well managed heifers cycle early.			A high % of early-calved mature cows should be inseminated in the first 3 weeks of mating.			Treated non-cyclers get in calf earlier.			
Your herd	97%		Your herd	98%		Treated	By PSM	Wks 1-3	Wks 4-6
		*****	Your herd	98%	*****	Your herd	0%	0%	0%
Aim above	90%		Aim above	95%					

your calving pattern and 3-week submission rate of first calvers compare?

Well grown heifers also produce more milk at their first lactation, are more competitive with mixed-age cows and will survive longer in the milking herd than less well grown animals.

Growing of heifers from weaning to mating is therefore a very important but often under-prioritised period in a cow's life. Nutrition is the mainstay of good health and growth.

- Regular weighing is required AT LEAST every three months and appropriate action taken depending on outcome. Aim to have replacement heifers at 30% of mature liveweight at 6 months, 60% at 15 months and 90% at 22 months of age.
- Poor growth rates may be the alarm bell indicating that something else is going on. Parasitism is at the top of the list! Weaners

require regular drenching. Ensure you are using an appropriate drench family/ combination and use a dose rate based on the weight of the heaviest animal. As well as use of anthelmintics, try to have weaners on 'safe' pastures until winter to minimise exposure to worms. Worm burdens carried over from spring will interfere with growth rates and are normally due to *Ostertagia*. Develop a parasite control programme with your vet specifically for YOU based on best practice principles and good science.

- Consider preferentially feeding late-born heifers so they have the best chance of achieving adequate liveweights by planned start of mating.

Other potential health issues for young stock that need to be considered include:

- Administration of appropriate **vaccinations**. In most cases they are clostridial and leptospirosis, but also worth discussing is use of Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) vaccine. Maintain good records (date, dose, type, tag numbers of animals etc) to ensure boosters are given when required and animals gain the full benefits.
- Monitor **trace element status** (primarily selenium and copper) by blood sampling or standing liver biopsies, and take supplementary action if required.
- Protection of animals from **facial eczema** (FE) by use of zinc supplementation and/ or supplementary feeding. Consult with your vet to work out the most practical, efficient and cost-effective FE prevention strategy for you.
- Keep replacement animals away from poisonous plants such as tutu, bracken fern, foxglove etc, as they are still selective and curious grazers!

Happy growing!!!

What's the goss?

We are stoked about winning Best Business float in the Feilding Christmas Parade in December. Keeping in with the animal theme, a quad bike was magically transformed into a

sleigh, which was 'pulled' by eight strapping reindeer (dogs with coats with their reindeer name on it), who each had their own minder. The Grinch rode the sleigh, accompanied by his sidekick **Bella** the Cocker Spaniel, who wouldn't leave his side!

A big welcome to new graduates **Ryan Carr**, **Helen Mather** as well as experienced vet **Fraser Abernethy** who joined the production

animal vet team in January. After their induction, Ryan will be joining the Feilding team and Helen the Palmerston North team. Fraser will be replacing **Anita** at Palmerston North. After four and a half years with Totally Vets, Anita will be leaving us in May to follow husband **Arno** down South. Anita and Arno will be sadly missed by the whole team, as well as their community in Apiti.

Milk quality review

Anita Renes

Prior to drying off, Totally Vets endeavours to conduct a milk quality review (MQR) with all of our dairy clients. There is more to be gained from this review than just a prescription for dry-cow therapy antibiotics. While dry-cow therapy is an important part of mastitis control, it is only one part.

The MQR is a valuable opportunity for you to set goals and make improvements to reduce bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC) and clinical mastitis in your herd.

What do you stand to gain by improving your milk quality?

- Increased production - reducing the BMSCC from 250,000 to 125,000 results in a 1.8% increase in herd production
- Reduced animal health costs - the cost of treating a case of clinical mastitis ranges from \$90 to \$200
- No grades - grades for breaching BMSCC limits can be costly
- Reduced losses - fewer deaths, dried-off quarters, damaged udders and less culling.
- Less stress and happier staff - managing a mastitis/SCC takes its toll
- Milk payment incentives - Open Country provides milk payment incentives for meeting company BMSCC targets. Fonterra review this option regularly and it may be introduced in the future

There will be more information on all three new vets as well as a formal opportunity to meet them face-to-face in the next few months.

Totally Vets are once again taking part in the Cancer Society Relay for Life on Saturday 10th March. This is a remarkable overnight team event to raise money for the Cancer Society, while acknowledging

- Pride in producing a quality product (and bragging rights to your neighbours!)

At your MQR you can discuss the following aspects:

- Bulk milk SCC curve - what does it tell us about mastitis in your herd?
- Clinical mastitis - is the rate of mastitis a cause for concern? When do the cases occur? What is the rate of calving mastitis in heifers? Heifers need to be managed differently to cows
- Analyse herd test data - what percentage of your herd is sub-clinically infected and what is the new infection rate?
- Mastitis cost calculation - estimation of what mastitis is currently costing you and what you stand to gain from improvement

The above information helps us to assist you with identifying milk-quality problems, select the most appropriate dry-cow therapy option and plan any further actions.

Totally Vets has veterinarians with specialised training in mastitis investigation. A visit during milking to assess the risk factors on your farm relating to the machine, cow, staff and environment can be extremely worthwhile. It is very important to seek expert advice before spending money on expensive technology - sometimes the solution is free! Totally Vets provide the following services:

- Analysis of mastitis data
- An action plan to improve milk quality
- Culture and interpretation of milk samples
- A milking management visit to assess and identify all the likely causes of mastitis on your farm with a detailed report
- Staff training on mastitis prevention, identification and treatment

cancer survivors, remembering loved ones and fighting back against this disease. If you would like to be part of our team on the day, please contact our Vet Nurse **Helen Ryan** on helenr@totallyvets.co.nz, who is once again organising the event.

Good luck to **Margaret** who is taking part in the 2012 Speight's Coast to Coast multisport event held on 10th-12th February. Margaret

- Staff training/revision on dry-cow therapy insertion technique and hygienic milk sampling
- Grade busting - emergency visit to stop grading

You get the most out of your MQR by supplying as much information as possible. If you have already signed up to Infovet and regularly enter your clinical mastitis events into Minda, then we already have most of the information we need. If you are not signed up for Infovet, you will receive a milk quality review questionnaire to fill in and return to us before your consultation. The more accurate the information you supply us, the better the advice we can give you.

Fig. 1 BMSCC. 2010 vs 2011

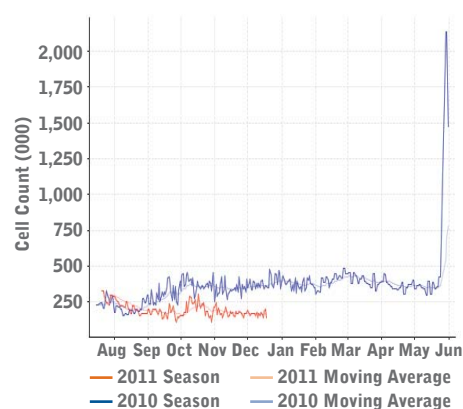
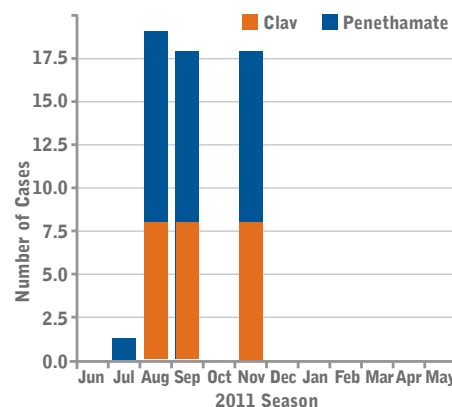


Fig. 2 Cases clinical mastitis (estimate)



has been training for the past year and will be taking part in the 2-day event which averages about 16 hours of either kayaking, road biking, or mountain running!

Finally, if you see Tara at our Palmerston North branch counting sleeps, it's because she is getting married on the 9th March - not many more to go! Our best wishes to you and Quayne Tara!

Fertility in beef herds

Joao Dib

Successful beef production relies on achieving key objectives, namely:

Weaning at least 95% of calves from mated cows

Keeping death rate in the herd to less than 3%

Weaning healthy, heavy calves

Keeping pasture quality high

The discussion of all the above objectives is beyond the scope of this article; we'll concentrate instead on factors that can affect low weaning rate. Good conception rate alongside good calving and good calf survival rate are the backbone of a top weaning rate.

Conception rate is influenced by many factors, among them the dam's nutritional

status pre-mating (body condition, trace elements), the feed ahead post-mating (research suggests a cow should eat at least 12kgDM/day from calving), the herd's disease status (BVD, Lepto, Neospora) and bull fertility.

Body-condition score of no less than 5.5 at mating: underfed cows will take longer to mate and have a lower conception rate. Research suggests that cows should be within 5% of their autumn body weight at start of mating. Adequate levels of copper and selenium are key aspects to check pre-mating and these can be checked with liver biopsies 3-4 weeks prior to the start of mating.

Neosporosis, alongside leptospirosis, are more likely to affect well developed pregnancies causing abortion, and should be considered if in-calf cows turn up empty at calving time (wet/dry). BVD is emerging as a significant disease affecting herd reproductive performance. A study of 94 heifer herds has found that 65% of herds were infected with BVD. BVD can cause a 5% lower pregnancy rate in BVD-affected herds.

Bull fertility and soundness cannot be emphasised enough and bull failure plays havoc with pregnancy rates. Figures vary but anywhere between 10-15% of yearling bulls are either infertile or sub-fertile. BVD-exposed bulls must be identified and dealt with well in advance of the start of mating. Vaccination can and should be undertaken.

In summary:

- Ensure your cows are in top body condition prior to mating
- Determine the status of copper and selenium levels and supplement early if needed - liver biopsies can be done at the works or we can take the samples from elected cows on the farm
- Consider vaccination to mitigate the effects of BVD and Lepto in the herd
- Check your bulls for fertility and soundness - ensure all bulls are tested for BVD prior to mating, and vaccinate

Please call Totally Vets and one of our veterinarians will be happy to answer any of your questions.



The tail-end ewe

Hamish Pike

Ewes weaned in good condition last year are likely give you more flexibility over the summer in terms of feed allowance and management.

This will probably have a flow-on effect in terms of reproductive success this mating season, provided the ewes suffer no more than a gradual dietary restriction over the summer.

We know that using good conditioned ewes to tidy up rank summer pastures will have little effect on their oestrus and ovulation, unless their diet is restricted abruptly, or they are

fasted e.g. in a drought situation. Prolonged under-feeding and emaciation (low body-condition) will suppress oestrus behaviour and ovulation, resulting in more dry ewes, and less multiples.

Given that so many of the production parameters for breeding ewes are linked to body-condition, it is logical to think that the productivity of tail-end ewes will be low. Apart from reduced fertility, tail-end ewes have a higher death rate, and appear to be more affected by worms indicated by higher faecal egg counts and dag scores.

Farmers have many approaches to dealing with tail-end ewes. These have ranged from ignoring them to culling, drenching and/or preferential feeding. Drenching light, daggy ewes in a mob may be useful but the benefits appear to be

short-lived if ewes are not preferentially fed at the same time.

The adequacy of the feeding of your flock can be monitored using body-condition scoring. A hundred or so ewes can be scored at any yarding therefore giving you an indicator of how well the flock is progressing.

The incidence of tail-end ewes appears to be extremely variable from farm to farm, and season to season. However, in order to achieve high productivity, it appears more important that **the average body-condition score (BCS) of a flock is 3 or above before mating, thereby minimising the number of ewes in BCS 2 or below before winter.**

For further information on body-condition scoring ewes, contact your Totally Vets vet.



Facial eczema - the importance of prevention

Greg Smith

Facial eczema (FE) was a significant problem last year and the conditions are shaping up for a repeat of the same again this year. The ideal conditions for FE are grass minimum temperatures above 12°C and moisture in the form of rain or high humidity.

The environment on farm makes a difference as well with north-facing paddocks, shelter (prevents drying) and plenty of dead matter (litter) in the pasture base - i.e. close to the ground - creating 'hot spots'.

WHAT ANIMALS ARE AT RISK?

Fallow deer, sheep and alpacas are the most susceptible, followed by dairy cattle (including weaners), beef cattle and red deer with goats being the least at risk. Horses are not affected.

Last year small block holders were badly hit as preventative measures such as zinc in the water supply are not routinely used. An alternative option is discussed later under treatment and prevention.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The most obvious symptoms of FE are due to photosensitivity: restlessness; shade-seeking behaviour; and reddening of non-pigmented skin and areas without much hair/wool cover. Sheep and goats will commonly develop a swollen face and ears with the ears tending to droop. The onset of photosensitivity is usually preceded by a drop in milk yield in affected dairy cows. For all species, there is leakage of serum and scab formation associated with the worst lesions. Signs in alpacas are similar to sheep but as they are stoic animals and do not readily display discomfort; a dead animal may be the first sign of a problem. A blood test can be used to screen for potential damage during periods of risk.

SPORE COUNTS

We strongly recommend that you check the weekly spore counts on the Totally Vets website (these can be provided as a weekly email report) but take preventative measures before these get too high. Spore counts above 25,000/g are dangerous; however lower counts are not completely risk-free.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

As the saying goes, 'prevention is better than cure' and this is particularly the case with FE. Start zinc-dosing before pastures become dangerous as this gives much better protection than crisis-dosing once the counts rise.

The methods of prevention are based around:

1. Slow-release capsules ('Time Capsules')
2. Zinc sulphate in the drinking water

3. Zinc oxide in the feed or by drenching
4. Grazing management and crops
5. Pasture fungicide spray

Capsules are best suited for use in sheep and in situations where water treatment is not possible. Capsules are ideal for lifestyle blocks and run-offs, last for 6 weeks and can be repeated if necessary. Totally Vets offers a service to administer these for those not familiar with their use.

Zinc sulphate in the drinking water is commonly used where an inline dispenser or header tank supplies the water troughs. Information regarding the amounts used and how to manage each method is best provided on a case-by-case basis, so contact Totally Vets to discuss these. Water treatment is not as effective for sheep as it is for cattle.

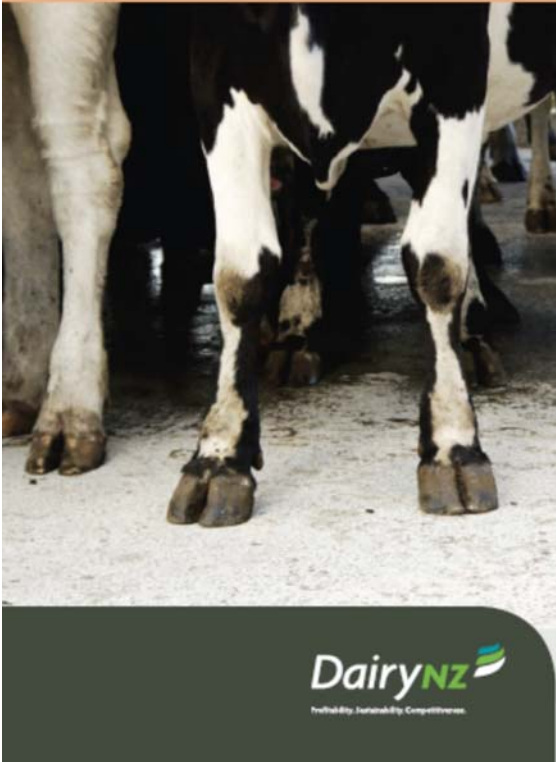
Pastures that have been well grazed in spring and early summer will have less dead matter and provide safer grazing in the autumn. Legumes and plantain are safer than grasses. Topping paddocks in summer will probably increase the risk latter on.

Finally, lowering stocking densities and leaving higher residuals will reduce the risk of animals grazing down to the pasture base.

Fungicide sprays must be applied before the spore count rises and have no effect on already dangerous pasture. Sprayed pastures remain 'safe' for up to 8 weeks but re-application of the spray is required after heavy rain.

Healthy Hoof Programme

Reducing lameness one step at a time



DairyNZ
Inhability. Sustainability. Competitiveness.

“Do you want to train your staff in the comprehensive understanding of dairy herd lameness?”

“Do you want to improve your skills in dealing with dairy cow lameness?”

“Find out what Healthy Hoof is all about?”

“Discover how Healthy Hoof can make a difference to lameness issues on your farm?”

Totally Vets brings you Neil Chesterton, from Inglewood Veterinary Services, to provide Totally Vets clients with a most comprehensive lameness seminar.

“Neil offers what is most probably one of the best - if not the best - training packages you will find in the world.”

Your technical knowledge and hands-on experience in dealing with lame animals on farm will be hugely improved by the training of ‘stamping out lameness’.

WHEN 22nd March 2012

WHERE Totally Vets, 25 Manchester Street, Feilding

TIME 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Followed by light refreshments.

To express your interest in this seminar, please register on the Totally Vets website www.totallyvets.co.nz or phone **06 323 6161** or **06 356 5011**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Steinlager Totally Vets Classic Golf Tournament

Monday 12th March 2012
Hokowhitu Golf Course, Palmerston North

Stacked Mixed Ambrose teams
11am shotgun start
\$15 per entry (conditions apply)
Entry fee can be charged to your current Totally Vets account
Nine holes or 18 holes available
Contact either clinic for your entry form.

Totally Vets Fishing Competition

Saturday 21st April 2012

Look for details in our March VetNotes.



Above: Last year's fishing competition winners