



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

MAY 2012



Above: Lucy Cahill is the Waikato Stud Achiever of the Year

## Lucy Cahill's year away from TVL

Katie McKinlay

Totally Vets congratulates Lucy on being awarded the Waikato Stud "Young Achiever of the Year" award for 2011. This New Zealand Equine Research Foundation scholarship is made possible through the generous support of the Chittick family and Waikato Stud.

This scholarship will help Lucy to further her equine career by taking up a six-month internship from August 2012 at the Scone Equine Hospital Intensive Care Unit in Clovelly, NSW. Throughout the year, this ICU sees over 1000 medical caseloads ranging from neonatal and adult medical to post-surgical cases. Lucy will be working under the supervision and guidance of Dr Jane Axon, a registered specialist in Equine Medicine, who has a particular interest in the neonate. We wish Lucy all the best as she takes up this exciting opportunity and look forward to her returning to TVL in August 2013, after some travelling.

## Introducing Fraser and Wendy

Aimee Perrett

Fraser Abernethy joined the Totally Vets team in January as a production animal vet, based at our Palmerston North branch. Having graduated from Massey University in 2001, he is delighted to be back in the Manawatu.



He grew up in the renowned gumboot-throwing region of Taihape and left to train at Massey as a veterinarian to avoid dagging 6000 ewes every year.

Fraser spent four years working and travelling in England and Europe before returning to New Zealand in 2006. Prior to taking up the position at Totally Vets, he worked in Rotorua for five years.

Having done most types of veterinary work over the years, he has more recently been involved with dairy herd health work, including farm systems and nutritional/production advice as well as day-to-day dairy practice.

Fraser is married to Ruth and they have two energetic children who tend to occupy most of their spare time. He enjoys all forms of fishing and watching sport when the kids are asleep!



Wendy Hull joins the veterinary technician team and is also based at the Palmerston North branch, covering much of the dairy technician work, as well as general

technician duties for the whole team. Wendy grew up in the Wairarapa; the first 14 years were on a dairy farm in Eketahuna. From there, her parents changed tack and she spent her remaining teenage years learning the ropes of a sheep and beef farm in Pongaroa.

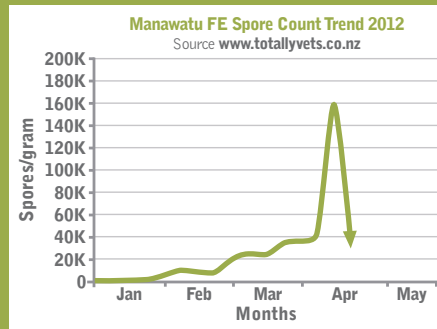
Wendy went on to study at Massey where she completed an Agriculture degree. After graduating, she worked in the rural banking sector for a couple of years, with the last 12 months based in Hamilton. Wendy is really enjoying her new practical, hands-on role with Totally Vets - something she had missed over the years.

Currently living in Ashhurst on a dairy farm with her partner managing it, she is enjoying the change of role and being closer to her parents. A talented hockey player, she has made the NZ U18 team, Central Districts U21 team, and Manawatu Central Mysticks. Currently, she is enjoying getting back into the Manawatu hockey scene, playing in the Manawatu Premier Comp league.

We are delighted to have Fraser and Wendy as part of our team.



# Totally Vets current stock health



Totally Vets counted some scarily high facial eczema (FE) spore counts in April - Himatangi sands hitting 1,605,000! FE likes the grass minimum temperature above 12°C and 'some' moisture. With slowing pasture growth rates in April, stock will be eating further into the pasture base where the spores live. Forecasting FE risk is a hazardous pastime so continue spore-counting your own pastures until counts are consistently down over a few weeks.



HA HA

## A young ventriloquist is touring the clubs

One night, he's doing a show at the Byron Bay Golf Club. With his dummy on his knee, he starts going through his usual dumb blond jokes.

Suddenly, a blond woman in the fourth row stands on her chair and starts shouting. "I've heard enough of your stupid blond jokes. What makes you think that you can stereotype women that way? What does the colour of a person's hair have to do with their worth as a human being? It's men like you who keep women like me from being respected at work and in the community; and from reaching our full potential as people. You and your kind continue to perpetuate discrimination against not only blondes, but women in general ... pathetically all in the name of humour!"

The embarrassed ventriloquist begins to apologise, and the blond yells, "You stay out of this! I'm talking to that little s\*\*\* on your lap!"

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## Teatsealing heifers

Greg Smith

The mastitis rate in heifers over calving is commonly around 25%. The cost of a case of mastitis in a heifer as determined by a recent study is between \$100-\$300. In addition, a case of mastitis affects production not only in the same lactation as the infection occurs but also in subsequent lactations. In the first lactation, this effect on subsequent seasons is even more pronounced. All in all, heifer mastitis is worth preventing.

Since Teatseal was first identified back in 2003 as a credible means of preventing heifer mastitis, subsequent trials have demonstrated a significant benefit. In the largest study

involving 1067 heifers, the untreated control animals had an infection rate of 22% compared with 7% in the Teatseal-treated heifers. In local herds, the results have been as good as or even better than this, so it is an option that we can recommend with confidence.

Teatseal is best administered 30 days prior to the PSC (planned start of calving date) for the heifers. A high standard of hygiene is required for insertion, so Totally Vets recommends and provides a service to administer Teatseal. The shed is the best location to achieve good hygiene and operator safety. The process will be easier on the day if the heifers have been trained to the shed prior to the treatment day. This requires more work on your part but one of the unintended benefits of using Teatseal is that the heifers are much easier to handle over calving because they are already familiar with the shed. So the time invested in the winter will be paid back in the spring.

**If heifer mastitis is a problem in your herd, contact Totally Vets to discuss Teatseal. If you are already intending to use Teatseal, allow plenty of time to book this in advance to organise the best date for your heifers.**





## Deer

Organise hind-scanning now.

## Sheep

Scanning ewes provides information that can be put to profitable use. Maintaining body condition score (BCS) in ewes is a key productivity driver.

Identifying tail-end ewes and providing them with special attention also adds to flock productivity.

## Dairy

Drying-off will be completed in most herds this month. Be wary with dry-cow antibiotic withholding times when treating later drying-off cows.

Right now, building body-condition in herds is a priority task. Most agree that achieving a BCS of 5 at calving is an important driver of farm profitability. Milk production, reproduction and animal health are all improved by having cows at the right BCS at calving. The target BCS

must be reached one month before calving. The amount of feed required for BCS depends on the quality of the feed and wastage. The cost of that feed must also be considered.

Totally Vets provides an independent BCS measuring service.

Measuring mineral status in your herds provides the starting point for using mineral supplements. Knowing what you require helps you determine which of the multitude of supplements may best fit your need. Talk to us if you need advice.



# Wishnowsky's Monitor Farm: the power of doing the basics properly!

**Ginny Dodunski**

The three years of the Beef+Lamb NZ Monitor Farm Programme at Simon and Dennis Wishnowsky's property will be coming to an end before the 2012 lamb crop hits the ground in early September. By next month, we will know what the ewe flock has scanned, and hopefully it will be another record result.

The farm has made wonderful progress through three years of challenging dry/wet/dry cycles and until recently, much poorer than normal pasture growth.

The performance of the ewe flock has underpinned an improvement in farm financial performance that is looking set to meet the original target of a \$53k increase in the farm gross margin (at 2009 prices; so even better in today's prices!).

The targets in the business plan were to wean 140% lambs to ewes mated, at 31kg lamb weaning weight, from the MA ewes, and 75% weaning from hoggets mated.

The Wishnowskys are making good progress towards this target; in 2011 the MA ewes weaned 134%, with a lamb weaning weight of 30kg. The maternal ewes weaned 143%, so are already achieving the target set.

There has been a strong focus on ewe feeding and body-condition management to achieve this performance in the existing and bought-in ewes which are mainly traditional breeds (Romney and Romdale). The achievement of the body-condition targets and subsequent good performance could not have been achieved without some very aggressive decision-making that went on last autumn, when things were dry and winter pasture covers were looking shaky. The modelling we did then showed that half the cows needed to go out grazing. Autumn nitrogen was also required, to properly feed

the ewes over winter and achieve target pasture covers at lambing and calving. We predicted that these inputs would more than pay for themselves, and they have.

The ewe hoggets weaned 70% (to ewes mated) in the first year this enterprise has been run; Simon has achieved this with a very focused programme that has seen these hoggets grown out properly and fed very well during lactation. A dedicated area of plantain/clover has been key to the success of this enterprise; these results may have been tough to achieve on pasture alone in 2011, given the dry autumn and wet October/November we had.

With these improvements in performance, the sheep breeding & finishing system gross margin has gone from 11.4c/kgDM to 13.8c/kg DM (at 2009 prices).

The next on-farm day is coming up on the **6<sup>th</sup> of June**, so if you haven't been before, or if you haven't been for a while, come along and check out the progress! As well as reviewing what's happening at Wishnowsky's, we always ensure there are good take-home messages that you can apply in your own business in the immediate weeks; so look out for some good winter and pre-lamb management prompts!



# Ewe management from ram removal to scanning

Ginny Dodunski

2012 is an opportunity for many flocks to reset the bar in terms of ewe body-condition, and the size of the tail-end. We know how much body condition impacts on ewe performance, yet on many properties, there is inadequate focus on this as a key driver of production.

If the bulk of ewes did not go to the ram looking great this year, then there is a problem with the system.

As we discussed last month, there is a real need to protect the condition that many ewes

are carrying into winter. This will require good feed planning that may include some controlled weight loss in the second trimester, but ideally you would draw a line in the sand that no ewe is to get below body-condition score 2.5, and manage accordingly.

- Do you know what proportion of your flock is currently at 2.5 and therefore need to be held there?
- Do you know what % can be managed for some weight loss, and who they are?
- Do you know what % are too light and need some help; and importantly, who they are?

Won't this all be so much easier when you have functional EID...

## At ram removal...

- Draft off light ewes, mark, drench and separate for preferential feeding or at least put in a smaller mob; maybe with the 2ths?
- Reassess these again at scanning and decide whether or not to winter the pregnant ones.
- In our 2009 'Tail-end ewe study', ewes that started the winter in light condition and managed to get pregnant suffered a whopping 17% death/loss rate through to weaning!

## Ram removal to scanning and beyond

- Plan to have enough labour on hand for someone to condition-score ewes at scanning if they're not going to be shorn - we can help!
- Have a plan to deal with the light multiple-bearing ewes that come off the end of the race - think now about allocating some extra space for them; some better country or even a winter crop. These ewes can put on condition in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters but they must have the quality feed available to do it! And you must drench them first.
- Parasitism is a big contributing factor to the state of very light ewes; if you're going to keep them, consider giving a long-acting treatment at scanning; discuss with your vet.
- Our 2009 study also showed that a short-acting drench did not help enough to lift the condition of these sheep when they were not given any other special treatment feed-wise.
- Put singles to work on the rougher areas of the farm.
- In the 5 weeks prior to lambing, multiple-bearing ewes must not lose weight, regardless of where they're at now. Look ahead at how you can manage your feed to come as close to that reality as possible!



## What's the goss?

We are all very sad to see our lovely **Anita** leave us to go down South later this month, but delighted she and husband **Arno** will be joined by the pitter patter of tiny feet - Anita and Arno are expecting a baby in September. Anita joined Totally Vets as a new graduate in January 2007 and has been a huge asset to the team - we will miss you Anita, wish you all the best and secretly hope you and Arno will be coming back our way sometime soon.

**Christine** thoroughly enjoyed the 101km

Forrest GrapeRide in Blenheim last month, after which she and 99 other Grape Crushing 'Virgins' were chosen randomly to each dive into a vat of Forrest Wine grapes. A little later and further down south, **Diane, Christine** and her two sisters biked the 185km Otago rail trail. They finished in style in Waipiata, where they managed to get kicked out of the pub for taking their own wine! Tut tut.

Huge congratulations to **Helen Dickens** who has been selected to play for the NZ Women's 50+ team at the inaugural International Hockey Masters World Cup, taking place in August in Canterbury, in the UK. Helen is selected from the National Hockey Masters tournament held in Palmerston North in

March, where she played in the winning 40+ age group team. Well done Helen.

It was a glorious day for this year's **Bill Abbiss** walk on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April, where approximately 60 people took part in the 20km walk from Halcombe to Feilding through various farms and properties. All funds raised from the walk go to St Johns Ambulance in Feilding.

Finally, Totally Vets would like to take this opportunity to wish **Grant** and **Pam Roberts** and **Hamish** and **Ginny Rutherford** all the best for their retirement. It has been an absolute pleasure over the years and we will miss you all.



# Liver fluke in sheep - is it an issue?

Ginny Dodunski

Although liver fluke is thought to be a reasonably common parasite, the significance of the disease is variable depending on geographical location and cumulative effects of the fluke on the liver. Liver fluke is known to be widely distributed throughout the North Island but it causes clinical disease in only some areas.

The life cycle of the liver fluke *Fasciola hepatica* is slightly different to normal parasites as it involves a small aquatic snail as an 'intermediate host'. The adult flukes 'graze' on the lining of the bile ducts creating an inflammatory reaction and scarring. This results in protein loss and anaemia, and can compromise liver function if severe.

Fluke snails live in areas of reasonably clean, slow-moving water that does not dry up in summer. The snails predominate from late summer through to early winter, so this is

when the most juvenile flukes are available to livestock. Ingestion occurs when stock graze in the wet areas where the snails live, so often fluke infections can be worse after dry summers.

The liver fluke infects the liver of many animals, but is mostly an issue in sheep. Although cattle are able to develop quite a strong resistance to fluke infection, sheep do not generate immunity and can potentially suffer ongoing liver damage from repeated infections. Thus we normally see fluke 'disease' in older ewes as their livers become more scarred over time.

Most of the white drenches on the market today will kill adult liver fluke; however immature flukes are only killed by a couple of specific drugs. If fluke genuinely is an issue, treatment is recommended in autumn/early winter to ensure removal of both adults and immatures. The ideal timing of these treatments depends on how early fluke infection starts on your property. This season, liver fluke is less likely to be a cause of ewe ill-thrift as ewes have not had to graze down hard into 'flukey' areas like swamps and stream margins, as we would see in a drier year with less feed.

However, a diagnosis of liver fluke as the cause of ill-thrift should be based on careful examination of the underside of the liver. Adult flukes may be seen in the bile ducts (the big white 'veins' on the underside of the liver) but the presence of one or two adult flukes in a

6 year-old ewe may have little to do with the reason she has lost weight. The scarring can be a bit trickier to define as the bile ducts are quite thick-looking normally.

Alternative methods of diagnosis include:

- Blood tests to look at liver function, protein and red blood cell levels
- Faecal egg count - a different method of counting needs to be used, so please tell us if this is what you are interested in
- An ELISA blood test which tests for an immune response to the fluke. This can be done on individual samples or on a pooled sample (up to ten animals). The antibody only persists for three months after infection

Chronic disease will present as ill-thrift, anorexia and anaemia. Severe disease may also cause bottle-jaw. Do not neglect the other potential causes of these signs: chronic intestinal worm challenge, Johne's disease, molar tooth problems, old pneumonia lesions, liver damage from other causes and small intestinal cancers are just some of the reasons we see for wasting ewes.

**In summary, be wary of diagnosing fluke solely on the visual appearance of sheep, and get Totally Vets to give you a hand to nail down the cause of any tail-end (post mortems can be very useful - see article on page 6). If fluke is an issue, we can help you target any treatment to the most appropriate time.**



# The value of dead and sick animals

**Barny Askin**

Several recent cases have brought home the importance of achieving an accurate diagnosis before embarking on a treatment regime. One case in particular stands out and highlights a scenario veterinarians are faced with time and time again.

A farmer phones up with hoggets that are failing to thrive. A few have died over the last few weeks. These deaths have usually followed yarding. The farmer has noticed some hoggets coughing in the mob and reasonably assumes that the problem is pneumonia, as he has had this before. Following further questioning and history-taking on the phone, it comes to light

that there has been the occasional scouring hogget with animals often looking seedy for a day or two prior to dying. Over the phone, this additional information is starting to sound more like a *Salmonella* problem. Also we have been diagnosing *Salmonella* fairly frequently in the last few months.

It was suggested to the farmer that the best course of action was to sacrifice and post mortem a hogget from the mob to confirm a diagnosis of *Salmonella* or pneumonia before deciding on a treatment plan. In this particular case, neither *Salmonella* nor pneumonia was the problem.

In this instance, the assumptions made by both the farmer and the vet were wrong. On post mortem the hoggets were found to be suffering from severe parasitism with Barber's Pole.

This example highlights the importance of achieving a diagnosis and not assuming we know what the problem is. It would have been a very easy option to give out incorrect advice and the hoggets would have received inappropriate treatment and missed out on a desperately

needed drench. We are not being stubborn or awkward when we are reluctant to give out drugs following a telephone conversation - there is a good reason.

Assumption can lead to misdiagnosis and the prescription of an inappropriate treatment. This leads to further deaths, frustration and more costs before a correct diagnosis and treatment can be offered. No one wins!

The take-home message is that post mortems are a very valuable tool. They are cheap and quick to perform. Usually a tentative diagnosis can be made on the spot. Often samples need to be sent to the lab to confirm a diagnosis.

Fresh animals are much more useful than rotting carcasses. In fact post mortems may be described as urgent if the maximum knowledge is to be learnt from them.

**So call us, preferably before an animal dies. Sheep and deer can be post mortemed at the clinic and cattle can be done either on farm or by arrangement at Wallace Corporation after skins have been removed.**



## Totally Vets heifer-grazing scheme

**Barny Askin & Greg Smith**

Totally Vets is running an in-house heifer-grazing scheme for our clients on our own clients' properties.

The benefits of this scheme to the dairy farmer are that Totally Vets oversees all animal health management issues relating to the heifers. We organise and administer quarantine drenching, all vaccinations as required, ongoing drenching, scheduled weighing and provide regular reports to both parties. We can also organise heifer synchrony programmes, oversee mating and pregnancy testing. In short, we manage the heifers from

when they are dropped off to when they are trucked home, so the dairy farmer needs minimal input.

**We have found properties which we feel are suitable for heifer-grazing, so if you are a dairy farmer with heifers, are looking for grazing, and would like Totally Vets to be involved, please contact either Barny or Greg at the Feilding branch on 06 323 6161.**

# Underwire bra removal

Margaret Leyland

ZaZa the horse got more than she bra-gained for when grazing in the back yard of her Halcombe home.

A couple of raised pustules appeared on her nose and her owner Joanne thought she might have rose thorns under her skin. When the pustules failed to heal despite being regularly cleaned and ministered to with tender loving care, Joanne decided it was time to call Totally

Vets. I sedated ZaZa and gave the spots a good clean. When I felt inside them with my forceps, I could feel something long, hard and thin inside. I initially suspected that it was a splinter of bone acting as a foreign body, but once I threaded it out, it soon became stunningly apparent that it was the underwiring from a bra. The wire had worked its way up inside ZaZa's mouth between her gums and lip and settled under the skin on her nose.

With three ladies living in the house, there is still some dispute about the owner of the missing wire, but ZaZa is doing well and the spots have healed up nicely.



# Farm staff - a key resource

Lindsay Rowe

Like any business, investing in the recruitment and selection (and then retention!) of the right staff is a critical factor in the success of your farming business. Getting all parts of this process right will give you the best possible people for your business and also improve the chance of retaining them (and the knowledge they gain of your farm) through into subsequent seasons - thus avoiding the need to invest again in the process.

## RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is the process of attracting the right people to apply for the job you advertise. More than just placing an advertisement, consider that you are marketing your vacancy. Job applicants recently surveyed by No8 HR cited housing and geographical location as the most important information they were looking for. It is therefore critical that applicants can see this information quickly in any advertisement you publish. After this, factors such as the type of farm and the job content will attract applicants to apply for your position ahead of others. For good examples of the information applicants are interested in, go to [www.no8hr.co.nz](http://www.no8hr.co.nz), click on Vacancies

and check the Job Information Pack for each position.

## SELECTION

Selection is about choosing between the applicants and deciding on the person most likely to be successful in the job and who presents the least risk to your business.

A good selection process will ensure that you gain insight into four essential areas before making any choices between applicants:

- Personality - the character traits that a person normally displays
- Values - the principles that a person holds to and how these might influence their expectations and experiences
- Capability - the natural capacity that a person has to learn
- Skill - the expertise that a person has already gained

There are a number of different assessment tools available, which range widely in their ability to successfully predict the suitability of an applicant. At the top of the list is a "work sample test". The applicant is asked to undertake an actual work activity as part of the assessment process e.g. fix a water leak, condition-score some cows, help in the milking shed. A "structured interview" is also right at the top of the list. This is based on the principle that the best idea of how someone will behave in the future can be gained by how they have behaved in the past, especially the recent past. In a structured interview, 50% of the questions examine the person's experience, 30% focus on their behaviours and 20% concentrate on their

attitudes. These questions are written down so that the same series can be asked of each of the candidates. Their answers should be recorded and then rated. This process is likely to be as much as seven times more accurate at finding the best applicant when compared to the traditional interview, which along with basic reference-checking, has a relatively low predictive value. However, in much the same way as with structured interviewing, a robust structured approach to reference-checking involving carefully formulated written questions with recorded and rated answers, can add significantly to the selection process.

In summary, your selection process for new staff should include as a minimum:

- A face-to-face structured interview with pre-prepared questions to help you evaluate their personality, values, capabilities and skills
- A "farm walk" that includes some practical questions and/or tasks
- Following the interview, a structured questioning of the referees provided

Remember, investing time in doing this process carefully at the beginning should see you score the best people available for your business. You will also save endless hours of pain and grief later on when a poorly researched staff selection turns to custard!

**If you would like to discuss this process further, contact Lindsay Rowe at the Feilding clinic who will be able to help you directly or will put you in touch with the experienced people at No8 HR through his Intelact consultancy connection.**



# RESULTS

THE PROOF IS IN THE PREPARATION



**POWERBUILT MEGA TOOL SET**

**OR**

**POWERBUILT SPANNER SET OR JACK**

GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT THIS SEASON BY PREPARING WITH MERIAL ANCARE PRODUCTS AND WE'LL HELP YOU STAY ON TOP OF SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS AROUND THE FARM WITH A NEW SET OF POWERBUILT TOOLS OR 2.5 TON JACK\*

\*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

## PREGNANCY-SCANNING SHEEP

**There's much more than 'pub talk' to be made from pregnancy-scanning ewes!**

- 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
- Identifying and managing multiples can bring a 5 to 1 return on the scanning cost
- Quit non-productive dry ewes early and conserve valuable feed for productive animals
- Single-bearing ewes can be relegated to more difficult areas of the farm

Totally Vets encourages those who are not scanning to look seriously at the advantages to be gained.

Contact one of our skilled and experienced operators for a no-obligation discussion. We are happy to discuss your individual requirements and the services Totally Vets can offer.

**For more information without obligation, please contact:**

**Totally Vets** on 06 323 6161

**Ross Edwards** on 0274 402 032 or

**Guy Haynes** on 0274 555 424