



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

FEBRUARY 2013



Above: Kirsten showing at the Queen of Hearts competition

## Kirsten Dalziell - a new face in Feilding

A warm welcome to Kirsten Dalziell who joins the Totally Vets reception team in Feilding. Kirsten was born and bred on an Angus stud in Kiwitea and attended Feilding High School. She has recently completed a Diploma of Veterinary Nursing at UCOL in Palmerston North.

Congratulations to Kirsten who has been selected to be part of the New Zealand team taking part in the PGG Wrightsons World Angus Forum youth team competition, in October 2013. She will be required to prepare and parade cattle for show, judge stock, compete in agri-sports and also test her general farming knowledge.

## BVD - It needs to be taken seriously!

**Barney Askin**

It doesn't matter how BVD virus gets into your herd, whether it is across the fence, from a new bull or any number of other potential sources, whether you are a dairy or beef farmer - the consequences can be devastating.

We are currently involved with several BVD investigations but a recent case in our area has highlighted the impact that the disease can have on a business. The farm in question is a sheep and beef property with approximately 400 breeding cows and their calves as well as a varying number of bulls, steers and some heifer grazers. Over the last 12 months, it has been estimated that the cost of BVD on this property has been in the region of \$70,000. This is probably on the conservative side.

The disease has manifested in many different ways on the property over the last year but started with a post weaning scour in the calves that lasted for approximately 6 weeks. During this period, there was almost no weight gain in these animals. The scour

was investigated and after all other possible causes had been eliminated, some calves carrying the virus (PIs) were identified and further blood tests demonstrated that the rest of the calves had been exposed to BVD virus. This scour and the subsequent prolonged lack of weight gain was the most significant cost to the farm.

Over the last 12 months on this property, we have also seen high and unexplainable empty rates in some groups of cows, several late-term abortions, calves born with neurological symptoms that have faded and died in the first few weeks of life, and calves that have died of mucosal disease (a very severe manifestation of BVD). Not every individual case has been investigated so it is possible that some of the issues above were not BVD-related but in just about every case that has been worked up, BVD has been identified as the cause.

A particularly concerning incident was when a synchrony and AI program was carried out on a mob of 18 bought-in heifers and only four heifers ended up pregnant (55-60% would be considered normal). One of the 18 was found to be a PI and in the end, only one calf survived past four weeks. Two died in

**Article continues onto page 2**





# Totally Vets current stock health

## Cattle

**Bovine herpes virus-1.** (BHV-1. Also known as IBR, it is widespread in New Zealand dairy herds. BHV-1 is implicated in a wide range of diseases and can present with many different symptoms, ranging from upper respiratory tract disease (snotty noses and runny eyes), unexplained milk drop to early embryonic death and infectious pustular vulvovaginitis

which may only become obvious with poor early PD results and/or early abortions.

This virus can be bought in with replacement stock and bulls and can be spread through nose to nose contact and even by infected semen. Once infected, animals can remain infected for life. However, vaccinations are available to protect your herd and minimise losses due to this costly disease complex.

### Article continued from page 1

the first week of life and one was euthanased because it too was found to be a PI.

A BVD eradication program is underway and almost completed on this property. Many carrier animals have been found, both in the breeding herd and in this year's crop of calves. It has required a large amount of effort and planning and has been a significant cost to the farmer. A whole herd BVD vaccination program has also been undertaken. The combined costs of this eradication and vaccination program are only a fraction of what BVD has cost this business in the last year.

There has been a nationwide BVD awareness campaign over the last few years driven by a very effective BVD steering group. We have held several seminars highlighting aspects of

this disease. There have been many articles in rural publications and we spend many hours talking about the disease and its risks while we are on farm. Despite all this, it is amazing at the complacency that seems to be out there with respect to BVD when the impact can be so devastating. I must add that complacency was not the issue in the case described above.

An explanation of how this disease works and the measures and testing that can be used to control it is beyond the scope of this article. If you are in any way concerned or would like to know more about your BVD status, please talk to your vet. If you would like us to hold another seminar on BVD, please let us know by ringing us or emailing Gaye on [gaye.stein@totallyvets.co.nz](mailto:gaye.stein@totallyvets.co.nz). We will gladly arrange this if there is enough interest.



HA HA

## Letter to a men's helpline

Hi Bob

I really need your advice on a serious problem.

I have suspected for some time that my wife has been cheating on me. The usual signs: if the phone rings and I answer, the caller hangs up, she goes out with the girls a lot. I try to stay awake to look out for her when she comes home but I usually fall asleep.

Last night, at about midnight, I hid in the shed behind the boat. When she came home, she got out of someone's car buttoning her blouse, rearranging her hair and spraying on some perfume.

It was at that moment, crouched behind the boat, that I noticed a hairline crack in the outboard engine mounting bracket.

Is this something I can weld or do I need to replace the whole bracket?

Shane

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We are currently seeing numerous problems attributed to this virus. If you suspect you have any issues or just want to discuss this disease further, please contact us at the clinic.

**Early pregnancy-testing.** By the time you read this, early preg testing of around 10,000 dairy cows will have been completed. These test results arm you with the information required to accurately cull empty cows when feed gets tight and plan early dry-off and priority-feeding of your early calvers. A bit of further analysis will allow you to assess breeding performance (3 and 6 week in-calf rates, conception rates etc) and can

potentially highlight problems to be dealt with before the next breeding season.

**Drench-check young stock.** With the parasite season in full swing, it is a good idea to check that your young stock drenching programme is working as intended! A cost-effective way of doing this is to perform a post drench worm egg count. Please call the clinic or your herd vet to arrange a check test.

**Watch out for Lungworm!** While disease associated with lungworm is more usually seen later in the season, we have recently seen cases of severe clinical disease in weaners

that has been diagnosed at post mortem. Disease is caused by irritation of the airways by larvae and adult worms, causing coughing, nasal discharge, ill-thrift and in severe cases death. Routine drenching for gastrointestinal parasites will usually remove lungworm as these worms are highly susceptible to modern drenches.

## Sheep

Remember to order your ewe fertility vaccines (Toxovax, Campylovexin, Androvax etc) well in advance as some like Toxovax must be ordered 4 weeks prior to delivery to the clinic.



## Hogget mating

Barney Askin

As with most things in farming, there are pros and cons to hogget mating.

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. 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.



## Barber's pole - a blood-sucking worm

Craig Dickson

Barber's pole (*Haemonchus contortus*) is a worm named for its red and white striped appearance. The red is the blood it has sucked from your animals. Significant burdens can cause significant reductions in productivity.

Barber's Pole sucks blood from the abomasum (the fourth stomach), causing anaemia and death in animals. It's usually lambs that suffer but severe burdens can also affect ewes. Outbreaks are seen in summer and autumn with rain or heavy dews during or after a hot dry spell.

It is not unusual for burdens to be high enough to cause anaemia in animals. The range of signs seen in affected animals varies:

- Ill-thrift (may be seen as a large tail-end)
- Pale gums
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Animals lagging at the end of the mob
- Collapsed or dead animals

Barber's pole has some special features that mean it behaves somewhat differently to other parasites of sheep:

- It is not typical for Barber's Pole to cause a scour as it sucks blood
- Barber's Pole is one of the most pathogenic worms i.e. small numbers can have a very detrimental effect
- Barber's Pole can lay up to 10,000 eggs per day - other worms more typically lay about 200
- Barber's Pole eggs and infective larvae survive longer than other worms during hot dry periods
- Eggs and larvae can survive during hot dry conditions and emerge on masse with moisture and warmth. This can be as short as 4 days under optimal conditions - for other worms the minimum time is around 21 days

Now is the time to be monitoring for Barber's Pole. An assessment of weather conditions, history of the pasture being grazed and observation of animals are all important. For the reasons mentioned above, lambs with *Haemonchus* typically will be shedding large numbers of eggs so some faecal egg counts may help in your decision-making. It is also essential that you know how you are going to treat if this disease occurs. Short-acting drenches are effective against *Haemonchus* but will only eliminate the current infection. These worms are continually picked up from the environment, so in the presence of a problem, it may well be worth treating with a product that has **extended protection** against *Haemonchus*.

Long-acting drenches available are moxidectin (Vetdectin or Cydectin - 10-day meat withholding period) or abamectin + closantel (Genesis Ultra - 56-day meat withholding period). This should be followed up in 4 to 5 weeks by a second drench in the case of an outbreak.

If you suspect you have a Barber's Pole problem developing or have experienced the problem in previous years, please ring us to discuss the current level of risk and the best options for prevention and treatment.

## What's the goss?

It is always so hard to say goodbye and there were a few farewells in December. **Nigel's** leaving party was a family-style night to remember. The very apt hunting and fishing dress-up theme was well represented - by some more than others... **Hamish**. The Karaoke machine was also thrashed by some more than

others... **Hamish**. We all had a great time and wish **Nigel** all the best with his future plans, hopefully featuring plenty of hunting and fishing.

**Paul** also retired at the end of the year and his send-off was held at the Palmerston North clinic, with many of Paul's clients there too, which was wonderful. **Paul** and **Sue** are really looking forward to this new stage of their life, eventually relocating to Papamoa later this year and spending more time with their children and grandchildren. We also said

goodbye to **Julie Slattery**, who has moved with her family to Queenstown. We will miss all of you but know you will all stay in touch.

Making the most of the summer weather, **Rebekah** and **Suzanne** attempted to do the four-day Tongoriro Northern Circuit tramp in January. The weather turned on day two, meaning they had one day and one night in a smelly DOC hut, caught a cold from the residents and then had a day's walk in the wind and rain to get back - the joys of

# What will the Facial Eczema risk be this year?

Greg Smith

Totally Vets has been monitoring the spore counts for some years now and has accumulated some good local data to help answer that question.

The graph below is of the average counts taken from the last three seasons (2010-2012). The division between north and south occurs at a line to the south of Feilding such that Feilding, Colyton and Halcombe are included in the area to the north, and Rongotea and Kairanga are in the area to the south.

A count of 20,000 is the level at which preventative strategies need to be put in place and a count of 40,000 the level at which clinical disease is likely to occur.

In the south, the preventative level is typically breached in mid-February and reaches levels likely to cause disease within two to three weeks and remains above this (i.e. 40,000) through until mid-May. In addition, spikes representing particularly high-risk periods are likely to occur any time from mid-March onward.

In the north, the preventative level is typically breached a week or so later in late February or early March and remains there through until mid-May. The greatest risk is at the end of the autumn from mid-April onward but the averages hide earlier periods of risk that have occurred in some years. These are not as high compared with the risk to the south or lasting as long, but clinical disease has been seen around Feilding in particular.

The graph shows that counts are not significant before mid-February and that preventative strategies need to be started by the end of the first week of February for southern regions and by the end of the third week of February in the north.

## PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

### Zinc compounds

For cattle, zinc in the water is still the most widely used strategy. Zinc in the water via inline dispensers, header tanks that reticulate

the water supply to troughs, or where these two options are not available but troughs are the sole water supply, Peta dispensers can be used directly in troughs.

In situations where the water supply cannot be used such as at run-offs, oral zinc boluses are available. These have a payout period of 6 weeks and require no maintenance once administered.

For sheep, zinc in the water supply is less effective as sheep have lower and more variable daily water intake, making zinc boluses the best option.

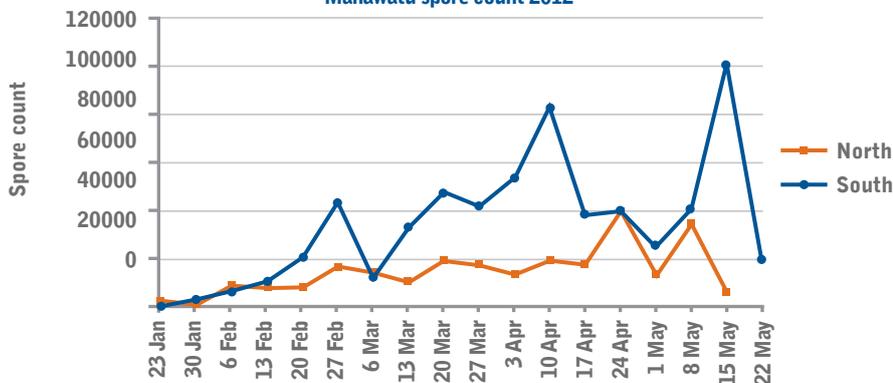
If you are unfamiliar with administering boluses, we can demonstrate their use or simply administer them all for you.

### Pasture-spraying

Fungicidal spray can be used to limit the growth of the facial eczema-causing *Pithomyces chartarum*. Spray is most effective when applied before spore counts rise as the spray does not remove existing spores. The usual approach is to spray an area equivalent to 14 days grazing and do this 7 to 10 days prior to grazing (as spores age, they become less toxic so the delay increases the safety of the sprayed area). A new area can then be sprayed every 14 days to always have a safe area available in advance.

If greater than 25mm of rain falls within 3 days of spraying, the affected area will have to be sprayed again. Sprayed areas remain 'safe' for 6 weeks. Spraying does not completely eliminate the risk and is generally considered to reduce the spore numbers by 60% compared to un-sprayed pasture. Pasture that already has high spore counts, i.e. greater than 200,000 should not be sprayed as no benefit is gained.

Manawatu spore count 2012



tramping! Pulling on their resources, they did a 3-hour mountain bike ride instead.

There are some special Totally Vets weddings coming up, with **Selena** and **Cam** tying the knot on 23rd February, and **Lucy** and **Daniel** on the 23rd March. Our best wishes to you for a wonderful day.

We hope you enjoyed the Feilding Christmas Parade as much as we did! With great teamwork and a lot of laughs, our Polar Express-themed float won the Best Business

category. It was wonderful to see so many of our clients enjoying the day.

Finally, a huge well done to **Chrissy's** boys **Nikora** and **Kyle**, who were part of the Lytton Street School Boys Jump Jam Team - they won the North Island and NZ finals at the end of 2012. For those who don't know, Jump Jam is a fast-growing sport involving fast-paced high aerobic fitness, with participants dressing up and sometimes singing - sounds like Hamish needs to have a go!





## Feeding your working dog

Helen Sheard

For smooth running, most farms rely on the athleticism of the working dogs. Unsurprisingly their energy requirements are two to three times higher than pet dogs.

A recent survey<sup>1</sup> showed that one of the most common health concerns farmers had for their dogs was that they were underweight. Most dogs are fed a mix of commercially prepared biscuits and farm-kill meat. Many dogs flourish on this diet, but there are some points to be aware of.

Meat in NZ has been found to be marginal or deficient in several minerals including iodine, B vitamins and A & E vitamins. Without bones, a meat-based diet alone is severely deficient in calcium. However, feeding bones has all the accompanying risks - gut blockage, perforation, and constipation.

Energy is required for all functions in the body, including digestion. If the diet is not easily digestible, there can be a net **loss** of energy from the body, simply through trying to digest the indigestible. The same occurs (though not to the same extent) when chilled meat is fed, especially on cold days. The body has to heat the food in order to digest it, expending energy in the process.

The easiest way to ensure the dog's nutrient requirements are met is to feed a commercial diet that meets AAFCO (American Association of Feed Control Officials) standards. These guidelines have established the minimum requirements for basic vitamins, minerals, and calorie intake. Some researchers suggest feeding twice daily to ensure all nutrients are optimally digested. However this often is impractical, as the morning feed has to be given at least an hour prior to work to avoid risk of gastric dilation-volvulus (twisted stomach or bloat).

Points to consider when choosing a working dog diet: look for a high-calorie, low-bulk diet - this ensures that the dog isn't 'filled up' with low energy materials; 20% fat per unit dry matter

is ideal - this level of fat provides an adequate energy source for dogs in hard work; 30% high-quality protein promotes lean muscle mass and aids in growth and repair of muscles.

Nutrition-related disease is still seen in some working dogs. Symptoms such as poor healing of the skin, susceptibility to fractures, joint problems and a lowered immune system have all been linked with poor nutrition<sup>2</sup>.

Most dry diets contain three to four times the nutrients of wet food on a dry matter basis so are more economical to feed. Below is a price breakdown of one of the premium working dog diets commonly used for working dogs.

Eukanuba Premium Performance - a 30kg huntaway in hard work will need 400g per day to meet his requirements. A 20kg bag of Eukanuba will last 50 days at a cost of \$2.66 per day.

<sup>1</sup> As yet unpublished as part of MVM dissertation on working dog health.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings Combined Seminar, Society of Sheep & Beef Cattle Veterinarians and Companion Animal Society NZVA. FCE Pub No 176, 1997. Grant Guilford. Nutrition of the Working Dog.

## Induction update for 2013

Allie Quinn

In October 2012, the following update was issued for the 2013 season by the four signatories of the induction Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - Federated Farmers, Dairy Companies of NZ, Dairy NZ and NZVA:

The group has set a limit of no more than 4% of cows to be induced in any individual herd for the 2013 calving season.

Limits beyond 2013 were due to be reviewed by the MoU stakeholders last December. Limits for the 2014 season will be notified

later this year. Dairy companies are conducting follow-up audit procedures with farmers, and are reinforcing the 4% limit for 2012/13. Farmers who have worked outside the guidelines will be personally visited by a milk company representative who may then also call in the veterinarian involved.

The MoU stakeholders and central government are determined that the current level of inductions must be further reduced.

Operational guidelines remain in place and veterinary certification must be accurate.

Where farm and mating management problems occur outside of the farmer's control, farmers can apply for a dispensation through their veterinarian to exceed the 4% limits. In 2012 this process was more formal than

in the previous seasons, and in each case, a representative of the dairy company supplied was involved in the decision.

In 2013, dispensations will only be granted where there is clear evidence that the predisposing circumstances are beyond the control of the farmer such as AB technician failure; outbreak of a serious disease in the herd; major weather-related issues such as regionally declared drought; or serious ill-health on the part of the farmer. Generalised reasons such as 'poor body condition' or 'poor reproduction management' are unlikely to be acceptable.

**For further information on requirements for calving induction, please contact your Totally Vets veterinarian.**

# Keeping your herd's Milk Quality on track

Allie Quinn

## COMMON PROBLEMS

At this stage of the season, rising bulk milk somatic cell counts (BMSCC) and reports of increasing clinical mastitis or poor mastitis cure rates are common. Soon, many farmers will be making decisions on culling and dry-cow treatment. These decisions impact on milk quality during the rest of this season and the cost of mastitis next season.

## WHAT'S MASTITIS COSTING YOU?

A great starting point for decision-making is to assess what mastitis is costing your herd. With the launch of the SmartSamm website in 2012, there are some great mastitis management resources available online.

Go to [www.smartsamm.co.nz](http://www.smartsamm.co.nz) and check out the SmartSamm Excel gap calculator.

There are three levels of analysis available - basic, intermediate and advanced.

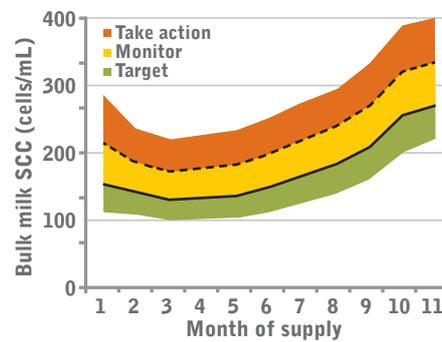
Start with the basic analysis and, if required, you can move on to intermediate or advanced levels to give a closer reflection of your herd situation. For help interpreting the Gap Calculator, contact us at Totally Vets.

## WHERE IS YOUR BMSCC SITTING NOW?

A high BMSCC indicates a high level of mastitis (usually subclinical) in the herd. For every 100,000 cells/ml, about 15% of cows will have (subclinical) mastitis. Sharp rises in BMSCC often indicate missed clinical mastitis cases.

Check out the SmartSamm resources to benchmark your herd's mastitis incidence. There are useful tools (eg Figure 1) to help decide when you should take action.

**Figure 1:** SmartSamm Guideline 11 describes how monthly BMSCC can be used to create a target, monitor and take action zones to help reach a season target average of 150,000 cells/ml.



## SEEK ADVICE FOR:

- BMSCC grades
- BMSCC alerts or warnings
- Spikes in BMSCC greater than 50,000 cells/ml
- Upward trend in BMSCC steeper than your herd target BMSCC curve

## HOW MANY CLINICAL MASTITIS CASES?

Clinical mastitis is expensive, can be stressful and disruptive to milking. High numbers of clinical cases may indicate problems with: preventing mastitis around calving or during lactation, or in some cases - over-diagnosing clinical cases.

## SEEK ADVICE IF YOU HAVE:

- More than **15** cases/100 cows treated annually
- More than **8** cases/100 cows calved for monthly clinical case rate at calving
- More than **16** cases/100 first calvers calved for first calver clinical case rate
- More than **1** case/100 cows in milk for monthly clinical case rate in lactation (all cows)

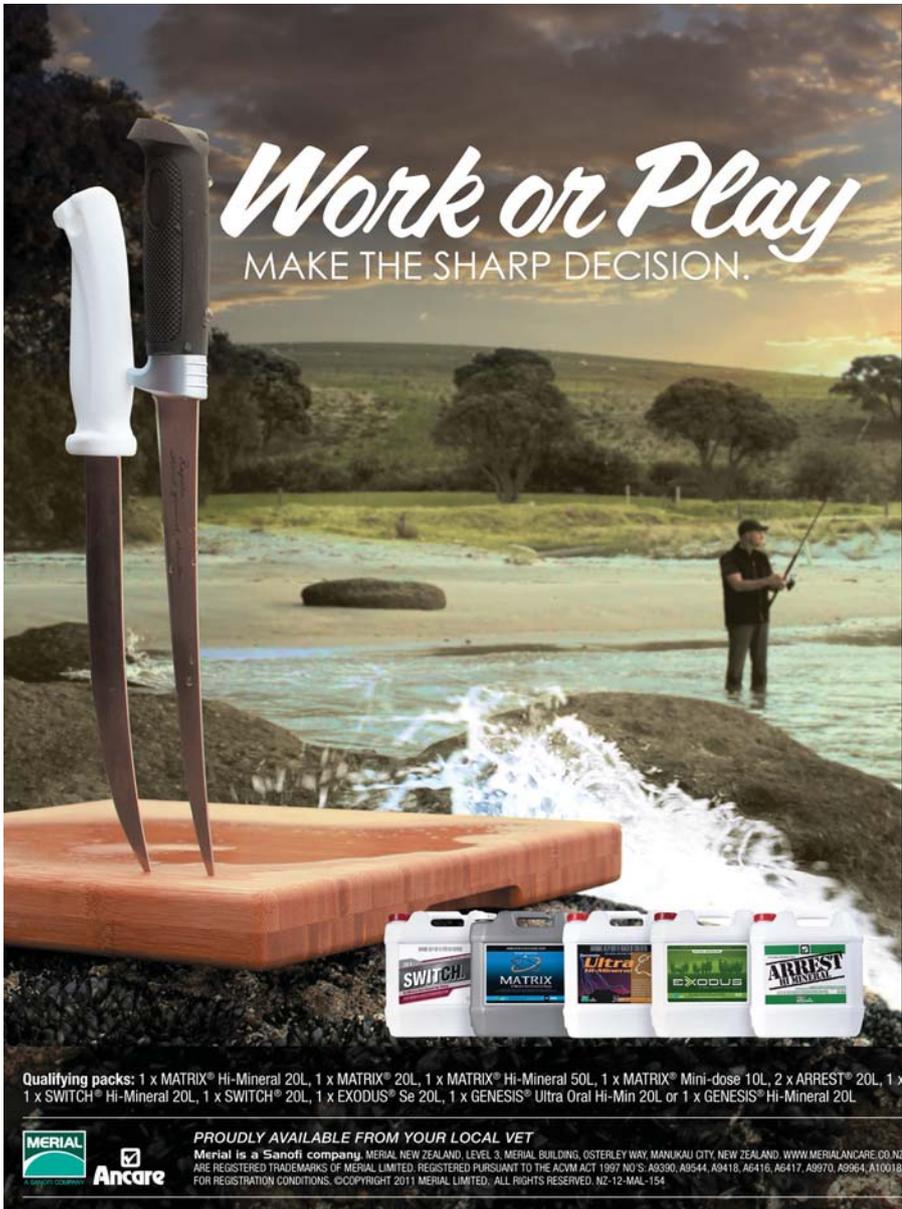
## TOTALLY VETS MASTITIS ADVISORS

Totally Vets can provide mastitis management advice. We carry out on-farm milking assessments as well as mastitis data analysis to identify your herd's key mastitis risks.

This information can then be used to develop tailored mastitis action plans. Veterinarians Greg Smith and Allie Quinn recently attended the advanced mastitis course held in Morrinsville during December. This milk management and milk quality control workshop is part of the accreditation process required to access Fonterra demerit relief.

**To find out more information about reducing the cost of mastitis in your herd, please contact us at Totally Vets.**





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\*WHILE STOCKS LAST

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### The Steinlager Totally Vets Classic Golf Tournament

Feilding Golf Club, Waughs Road, Feilding  
Tuesday 12th March 2013

Stacked Mixed Ambrose teams  
11am shotgun start  
\$20 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 13th April

Look for details in our March Vetnotes

