



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

SEPTEMBER 2013

Jon and Crystal Cranshaw,
one of our two winners.

All Blacks tickets - our two winners

Congratulations to our clients Jon & Crystal Cranshaw and Shane Robinson who won tickets to watch the All Blacks v Wallabies test match on the 24th August.

The tickets were drawn at the Winter Shout seminar/dinner held at Totally Vets Feilding in July, in association with Bayer who sponsored the evening and provided the prize.

The event, attended by 40 of our Totally Vets dairy clients, focused on spring mastitis and metabolics. Totally Vets' Fraser Abernethy also presented 'the transition cow', in preparation for the season.

Jon, Crystal and Shane thoroughly enjoyed the evening and were particularly rapt with their test rugby tickets.

FARM FOCUS

Ross & Ruth Richards

"Giddy, Ross here." I must have said those three words a thousand times over the last 20 years, and the response from Taumarunui Vet Clinic staff (now Totally Vets) has always been the same - friendly, helpful and professional.

In 1993, with family, we purchased a **very** run down, medium hill country, 240ha effective, farm in the Central North Island. Situated between the Waituhi and Pungapunga Valleys, we started as equity managers of Romani Farms Ltd. Today we own the home farm and have expanded through leasing to run 660ha effective. We winter 2800 ewes, 800 hoggets, 170 Friesian cross beef cows and 50 Once Bred Heifers, 270 yearling cattle, and 20-50 R2 cattle, depending on the season.

We mainly finish what we breed. We buy in replacement Friesian cross heifer calves, service bulls and the occasional ram. We have a recorded flock of high fertility, facial eczema-tolerant Coopworth sheep that we are focused on 'toughening up'. The ewes do not get drenched, and the ram hoggets are subjected to major worm challenge by not drenching from weaning on. Only the tough survive to be considered as sires or offered for sale. Those that do make it through need to have high SIL indexes to stay.

Ross & Ruth Richards,
with their youngest child

As a result of these mixed stock classes, we see a fair bit of our local veterinarian Carin de Groot - from routine tasks like sheep and cattle scanning, to more unusual jobs like tipping toxin down rams throats for facial eczema tolerance testing, and a try at bloodless castration of cull two-tooth rams. Over the years, we have had some major issues, like the nightmare of a rotavirus outbreak in our beef calves, and the puzzle of BVD in young cattle that had shown no symptoms except lack of growth.

Through all this, I have come to really trust and value the help and advice from the staff at Totally Vets Taumarunui. They are a key strength in our business - our animal health plan is in constant use! Additionally, we have used Trevor Cook for 5 years, as our Farmax consultant.

The highlight of any trip into town is the call into the vet clinic for a coffee. Everyone there is knowledgeable, keen to help, always smiling and happy to talk to a grizzly old farmer. It does my heart good and I always leave with a smile on my face.



Totally Vets current stock health

Dairy

What an unusual winter we've had. The grass has really been bolting away since the drought. While it has been excellent weather for calving, these conditions have created a situation of increased metabolic problems in dairy herds around the region. Talk to us if you require more help managing this situation.

It is metrichecking time. There is a lot of evidence that treating dirty cows early is very

beneficial and can make a big difference to that all-important 6-week in-calf rate. Ideally, every cow should be checked as soon after 2 weeks post-calving as possible.

Make sure everyone is trained up on heat detection. As with treating uterine infection, the main benefit in treating non-cycling cows is in improving that 6-week in-calf rate, not overall pregnancy rate. If you are going to treat non-cyclers, do it early.

HA HA

Never lie to your mother

Peter's mother came for dinner. She couldn't help but notice how lovely Peter's flatmate, Joanne, was. She wondered if there was more between Peter and Joanne than met the eye. Peter volunteered, "I know what you must be thinking, but I assure you, Joanne and I are just flatmates." Later, Joanne came to Peter saying, "Since your mother came to dinner, I can't find the frying pan. You don't suppose she took it, do you?" "I doubt it, but I'll email her just to be sure."

Peter wrote:

Dear Mum

I'm not saying you did take the frying pan from my house. I'm not saying that you did not. The fact remains that it has been missing since you came to dinner. Love Peter

The reply came back:

Dear Son

I'm not saying that you do sleep with Joanne, and I'm not saying you do not. The fact remains that if she were sleeping in her own bed she would have found the frying pan by now. Love Mum

Free pet lamb vaccination service

Barney Askin

Last year, we noticed that many pet lambs died in the run up to Pet Day. Some lambs, my own kids' lambs included, were actually found dead on the morning of Pet Day. This was distressing for the children (and parents!), many of whom had put a lot of work into these lambs. The reason that most of the lambs died was a condition known as pulpy kidney. This is invariably a fatal condition; lambs are usually found dead and there is no treatment.

There is a vaccine known as 'Lamb Vaccine', which can be given to lambs at or around the time of docking and protects lambs against tetanus and pulpy kidney. Unfortunately, there is no Lamb Vaccine available in New Zealand this season. However, there is a vaccine known as '5 in 1' which protects against pulpy kidney and other fatal diseases to which lambs can succumb. This vaccine requires two doses given one month apart, and will give excellent



protection for the next twelve months.

Totally Vets would like to help ensure that as many pet lambs as possible make it to Pet Day, by offering a **free vaccination service** to all of the rural school children's pet lambs in the areas serviced by Totally Vets.

If you would like to have your pet lambs vaccinated, please bring them along to our Feilding, Palmerston North or Taumarunui Clinics during the week of Monday 9th to Friday 13th of September, between 9am and 4pm, leave your lamb(s) in the car and come in and tell one of our receptionists that you are here. If you like, we would also be happy to put a ring on your lamb's tail at the same time.

One month later, from Monday 14th to Friday 18th October, 9am to 4pm, we will give the lambs their booster vaccination. If you are happy to do this second injection yourself, then please let us know at the time of the first injection and we will provide you with the next dose in a syringe, for you to administer. This second vaccination will also be free of charge.

Please take advantage of this service and hopefully, we can get as many pet lambs as possible into the show ring.

Wishing you all the best for pet lamb season!

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Sheep & Beef

Considering the current growing conditions and the level of metabolic problems we have seen in dairy cows this season, be aware of grass staggers (magnesium deficiency) in beef cows. The earlier you calve, the greater the risk. Options for supplementation include intra-ruminal boluses, hay dusted with magnesium oxide (MgO) and lick blocks. We always recommend the first two options over lick blocks, which do not ensure a predictable dose to every animal. Talk to us about the best method for your situation.

We have found high pepsinogen levels in struggling beef cow mobs indicating the presence of high numbers of the worm *Ostertagia*. Keep a close eye on pregnant cows, especially if they are on lower pasture covers and consider drenching some or all of them pre-calving, or getting us to take some bloods to measure pepsinogen levels.

Type II ostertagiasis is a real risk this year. In this syndrome, *Ostertagia* larvae stop their development in the wall of the stomach and can emerge en masse. We advise treatment with an injectable 'mectin' product that can access the inhibited larvae.

Pasture covers and body-condition scores are variable going into lambing. Little can be done now to change the outcome for those northern farms where rain was patchy and ewes are light, but let's hope the weather plays the game through the rest of spring, to give our lambs the best possible start. Looking ahead, think about weaning those light ewes early, and plan for some good feed to wean lambs onto.

Make sure all your docking gear is sorted and you have got any vaccines or other treatments ready to go.

Spring madness

Chris Carter

Our vets have been in the thick of calving cows and more recently treating those with metabolic imbalances. However in the heat of dealing with calving cows and getting the calves up and running, a focus must remain on the next couple of months and on tuning cow nutrition to ensure you don't miss those production targets.

The quality of what goes into a cow will directly influence her body weight and body condition. Body-condition scoring is now becoming integral practice in dairy herds and our vets are visiting farmers who have implemented this practice every 4-6 weeks, carrying out herd check walks and talks.

Condition-scoring cows provides certainty as to a herd's production peak and how successful this year's repro season will be.

When you are in the heat of the daily operational "battle" it is not always easy to gauge whether herd condition is slipping and when condition is lost; concerted effort is required to regain body-condition score and weight.



To move a cow one body-condition score (BCS) unit takes 3-4 weeks on high-quality feed but the gains that flow from this are significant.

In terms of milk production, increasing BCS at calving from 3 to 4 gives an extra 17.5kgMS for the season; from 3.5 to 4.5 an extra 15kgMS; and from 4 to 5 an extra 12kgMS.

Eighteen percent of cows at BCS4 at calving will not be cycling at the start of mating while less than 10% will be non-cyclers if the cows calve with a BCS of 5.

Through regular visits we link BCS with milk production and reproductive performance (6-week in-calf rate) using our Infovet systems.

By identifying and recognising trends in this analysis, we can use this information to assist you in pasture and fertiliser management as well as tuning trace elements, minerals and feed supplements.

Regular body-condition scoring is key.

So often we talk about the financial gains from having healthy well-fed cows but one of the big benefits is peace of mind. Your operation runs smoothly and there is more certainty as to where you will end up.

If you're not already on our herd check programme, give us a call or talk with your vet.



Docking time - to drench or not to drench?

Ginny Dodunski

There may be a higher than normal worm challenge to ewes and their lambs on some farms this spring.

Given last season's dry summer/autumn and poor store lamb prices, holding lambs for longer than ideal was commonplace on breeding farms, in the hope of better returns from later lambs of killable weight.

NZ research has shown that the big driver of spring worm contamination is the percentage of lambs carried through the previous autumn. On farms where more lambs were held, this is likely to mean a greater level of worm challenge to ewes and their lambs.

If this sounds like you, should you do

something about it at docking? Read on...

EWES

A potted summary of the NZ research on drenching ewes at docking is:

- Production responses to drenching ewes at docking (improvements in body weight/condition, lamb weaning weights or wool weight) have been inconsistent
- Even when light-conditioned ewes have been targeted for treatment, measurable production responses have been hard to come by
- However a docking drench will consistently reduce dagginess in ewes at weaning; this is often an important factor on-farm in deciding the usefulness or otherwise of a drench!

If contemplating a docking drench for ewes, it is important to be 'Wormwise' and not let this treatment contribute to a drench resistance situation. Ewes drenched at docking will often not be treated again for many months, and given the treatment is done at a time of year where worm survival on pasture is starting

to improve, resistant worms that survive your treatment could have a survival advantage for some time.

So if you are contemplating treating ewes at docking:

- Talk to your vet about appropriate product choice for your farm; it may well not be your 'regular' combination
- Consider only drenching a proportion of ewes to maintain some worms in refugia; the importance of this probably varies between farms; again talk to your vet

LAMBS

It is not unusual for a proportion of lambs to develop a scour at about 3 weeks of age. The main cause of this is usually a worm called *Strongyloides*; levels of this worm rise and then fall very quickly within a few weeks of birth. It is not associated with production loss, and does not require treatment. If scouring lambs look 'off', the cause may be something else like coccidiosis, which we do see occasionally.

In summary, there is no good reason to drench lambs at docking.

On some farms in some years, there may be reason to drench lambs between docking and weaning. Where ewes lambed in light condition and feed has been tight, many lambs may self-wean after about 8 weeks, and be more prone to the effects of parasitism than they would be if feed was good and mums had milked on. Again, have a chat to us about the pros and cons of drenching at this time.

Gossip

A huge well done to **Hugh and Judy Akers** of Broadlands Station, suppliers to ANZCO, who won the Blackdale Sheep Industry Supplier of the Year Award at the second annual Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) Sheep Industry Awards held in Invercargill in August. Broadlands is a longstanding supplier into ANZCO's Waitrose contract and has twice featured its top 5 North Island suppliers in the last 5 years. Committed, contracted supply from a majority of farmers to the best-performing meat companies is going to be key in restoring

profitability to the sheep industry; good on you Hugh and Judy for leading the way!

Our equine vet **Lucy Russell** won the unregulated section of the Central Districts Dressage Winter Series on Spirit, **Calla Toyne's** pony - well done Lucy! The event was held over two weekends in May and July. Calla and Lucy were obviously delighted with the win.

It's amazing what talent lurks in our team. **Mark Eames' wife Carrie**, plays the fiddle in 'The Winsome Lost', a contemporary acoustic folk band. They are playing at Murray's Irish Bar on 9th September, at

the Shepherd's Shemozzle at the Huntaway Festival in November, and at the Totally Vets staff Christmas party later in the year. We are all very excited about having them perform - check them out on their Facebook page.

At our Palmerston North branch, we welcome **Colin Wakelin**, who has joined the team for a three-month period, from August to November, helping out during calving and the mating season. A very experienced vet, Colin has spent most of his working life in the South Island and the Cayman Islands - an interesting mix, with lots of stories!

Bloat management

Craig Dickson

Pasture bloat is a serious and unpredictable condition of grazing cattle. Despite years of research into bloat prevention, it is still a common problem in New Zealand, largely as a side effect of improved pastures and the push for high production.

Spring and autumn tend to be the most dangerous seasons when young, lush pastures are high in protein, water and starch and low in fibre. Fermentation of this feed in the rumen produces excess gas that becomes trapped in the rumen contents. This forms stable foam that cannot be belched out.

Cattle can bloat within 15 minutes of being put onto high-risk feeds. Outbreaks of bloat commonly occur, however individual cattle can die of bloat with little sign of bloat in the rest of the herd.

Cattle suffering from bloat will have a distended abdomen - most obvious in the upper left-hand flank. Initially the cow is restless, stops eating and tries frequently to urinate and defaecate. As the distention becomes worse, the animal shows severe respiratory distress and may have its tongue out and head and neck extended. Cattle eventually die from heart or lung failure due to the pressure of the



distended abdomen on these organs.

If you notice an animal with early signs of bloat, drench them with bloat oil or 100ml of vegetable oil if this is not available. Remove the herd from the offending pasture and feed hay or mature grass/silage. Animals in severe distress will need to be stabbed in the upper left-hand flank to relieve the pressure. If you are unsure of how to do this, speak to your vet now so that you will be prepared.

There are a number of other conditions that can cause a cow to appear bloated. If the animal does not respond to initial treatment, call a vet.

There is no one bloat control measure that will be 100% effective on its own, however the risk of bloat can be significantly reduced by a combination of management practices and bloat prevention products. An extra bonus is that most of these strategies improve production/profitability in addition to controlling bloat and include:

Avoid gorging of high-risk pastures by hungry cows. This is more likely to happen on fast spring rounds when feed is tight. Options are to offer hay or silage; avoid high-risk paddocks as the first feed after morning

milking; alternatively graze high-risk pastures with poorer quality pastures.

Ensure the diet contains adequate fibre.

Higher pre- and post-grazing residuals lower the incidence of bloat as the pasture is more mature. Adding hay or straw to the diet will provide additional fibre with the added benefit of improving rumen function and reducing the risk of sub-clinical acidosis.

Rumen modifiers. These are oral products that alter the rumen flora make-up by increasing the population of efficient energy-producing bacteria and reducing the population of less efficient gas-producing bacteria. Rumensin and Rumenox are examples of a rumen modifier and are available in a variety of form including powder, liquid and capsule.

Bloat deterrents. Modern bloat deterrents (e.g. Bloatenz) act by breaking down the stable foam in the rumen. They can be administered via drinking water or directly drenched. Dose rate may need to vary with the level of risk.

Please speak to Totally Vets about which bloat management strategies are most practical for your situation.

Lloyd Smith training day

Totally Vets is pleased to bring Lloyd Smith to the Manawatu for a working dog training day, to be held on Monday 14th October.

Lloyd lives in North Otago, has trained countless working dogs and personally achieved 39 trial placings in both Huntaway and Heading classes. Lloyd enjoys sharing his

learnings about the training of dogs and is the author of "From Pup Pen to Paddock".

Spaces for this event will be limited. If you wish to register, please phone Catherine or Eliza at the Feilding clinic on 06 323 6161. Venue and details will be confirmed.

In addition to a public session, one-on-one training will be available for selected individuals.



How you can help your school or sports club

Gaye Stein

Initiated by Totally Vets, you have the opportunity to participate in a 'Supporters Partnership' with our drench suppliers, Merial Ancare and Zoetis, for the benefit and reward of rural schools, rugby clubs and netball clubs in our communities.

Totally Vets is able to record the school or club nominated by the purchaser of the drench product and credit a percentage of the sale to their respective choice. The payments are assembled and distributed to the school or club based on a calendar year and paid out around May to June of the following year. We currently have 34 schools and sports clubs registered on the scheme, with a choice of 64 qualifying products.

This is not an increase in the cost of any product, but a contribution from the drench suppliers and Totally Vets for a business partnership and support towards our rural schools, rugby clubs and netball clubs.

Last year Totally Vets Ltd returned \$9,634 to our rural community.

Over 13 years, there has been a distribution of \$139,240.

This year Kimbolton School, near Feilding, received \$354 and are putting this amount towards their upgrade of the school playground. They have completed the first stage and are now adding more to their Adventure Playground.

Te Kawau Netball Club, Rongotea, decided to use the \$80 towards uniforms and Halcombe School directed their donation of \$589 towards their "Green Team" (a group of students that take responsibility for their school gardens and environment) - they are planting a new native area this year and the money will go towards plants and mulch.

Awahou School, with our donation of \$1284, resurfaced all of the bark in their school playground, which desperately needed doing.

Funds for the Feilding Yellows Rugby and Netball Club were gratefully received and their \$590 will be put towards the teams, upgrading uniforms and equipment.

Fundraising in a small rural area can be difficult, so thanks go out to all of the local families who chose them as their beneficiary.

If you would like the chance to support the school or club of your choice, please ring Gaye Stein on 06 356 5011 to discuss how this can be set up.

Alternatively, when you visit one of the clinics, you will be able to register by completing a nomination form. You can also visit our website www.totallyvets.co.nz and click on Sponsorship. You will be able to download the form as a pdf to either email to us or drop off at one of our clinics.



Halcombe School 2012 Green Team (left to right): Danielle Hina-Ferris, Nelly Skelton, Juliet Bonnor, Olivia Durston, Holly Gates, Jahden Paki

Leptospirosis - timing is everything

Chris Carter

With over 100 human cases of leptospirosis being reported last year and 51% of these occurring in farmers or farm workers,

the need remains to be vigilant with personal hygiene when working with stock, as well as maintaining vaccination programs.

Survey work (including dairy herds in the Manawatu) has proven vaccination of dairy calves must be brought forward and should be started at 4-6 weeks of age. The old approach of first vaccinating at 6 months of age is gone.

If first vaccination is delayed, the calves run the real risk of becoming leptospirosis-infected prior to their first vaccine shot. This will result in leptospirosis living in the kidneys of the calf and will persist through to when she enters the herd.

This persistence of leptospirosis in the kidneys is then a risk to workers' health.

An important fact: vaccination will not eliminate leptospirosis from an animal that has already been infected.

By vaccinating with Ultravac 7-in-1 at 4-6

Are you repro ready?

Greg Smith

All too soon, the key dates for mating will start to roll around, so now is a good time to start the planning for this important event.

If you haven't already done so, a review of how last year went and setting some goals for this year will help motivate you for the season ahead. DairyNZ, along with the help of many others, have provided some great tools to measure performance and put an economic value on improved performance. Your fertility focus report available in MINDA provides the results from previous seasons at the same time as highlighting the areas for improvement. Combining these give you a great opportunity to plan your mating by focusing on what will provide the most value.

As an initial step, we recommend a quick 15-minute consult to review your Fertility Focus Report (FFR) and calculate the lost economic value or gap from not meeting industry targets. If this highlights a significant enough gap, then a closer look at the FFR will identify the areas for improvement and a plan can be drawn up around these to avoid the shortfalls of last year.

A successful mating is a combination of the rate at which cows become pregnant as well as final empty rate. The measure of this rate is the 6-week in-calf rate which is influenced

by submission rate (SR) and conception rate. The target submission rates are 90% by three weeks and 95% by six weeks and the major influences on SR are the number of non-cycling cows and heat detection. As a guide, recall how many non-cyclers you had last season - **the target is 15% or less.**

The key areas influencing non-cycler rates are body-condition at calving and weight loss after calving. In terms of monitoring where the herd sits during the year, regular body-condition scoring (BCS) is an objective way to check progress. The times to BCS are pre-calving, pre-mating, after mating and at drying-off. This information can then be used to plan feed budgets.

HEAT DETECTION

A missed heat is a loss worth about \$200, so heat detection is worth doing well! Mating activities should be the responsibility of experienced staff, particularly heat detection. If experience is an issue, then invest time in training staff either yourself or with our help.

HEAT DETECTION AIDS

Tail paint - apply early (32 days before planned start of mating) to detect pre-mating heats. Paint is best applied as a 20cm by 5cm strip from the base of the tail and forward. The hair should be well covered but not so thick that hair fibres cannot be identified. Tail paint should be touched up at least weekly.

Heat mount detectors - improve detection rates. They are increasingly popular and are now more user-friendly than ever.



CONCEPTION RATE

The influences on conception rate (CR) are more difficult to qualify. We know that cow health, in particular the presence of endometritis, has a significant negative impact. Suffice to say, it should be dealt with in the lead-up to mating.

We also know that the first heat after calving has a low CR of around 35%. The CR for subsequent heats rises quickly towards a normal rate of around 60%, so the number of cows having their first heat during the first or second round of mating will therefore lower the overall CR.

All the effects already discussed such as body-condition, calving pattern, non-cyclers and heat detection are therefore likely to influence CR, and improvements in all these areas will lead to better outcomes overall.

Finally the number of cows pregnant to the bulls is often disappointing. Bull numbers - 3% plus 1 of anticipated open cows by the end of AI (typically 30 - 35% of the herd) as well as bull fertility and health are key. Totally Vets' experienced bull testers can check fertility and make sure vaccinations are up-to-date.

weeks of age and repeating 4-8 weeks later, the calves will be protected against clostridial diseases and leptospirosis.

Key messages for dairy herd owners: vaccinate your calves early; ensure all cattle are included in the vaccination program and maintain annual boosters for all cattle in the herd.

Give us a ring if you would like advice on implementing a leptospirosis vaccination programme, or would like to take advantage of our leptospirosis vaccination service.



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