



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

DECEMBER 2013
JANUARY 2014



Totally Vets Client & Staff Christmas BBQ

Join us on **Friday 13th
December 2013** at our
Feilding, Palmerston North
and Taumarunui clinics
from noon until 6pm.

We would love to see you!

Hello Taumarunui!

Ginny Dodunski

When Totally Vets first looked at purchasing Taumarunui Veterinary Clinic, and knowing we would need to find another experienced vet for the practice, I remember thinking 'what a neat opportunity that would be for someone who liked sheep and beef work'.

I never expected at the time that person would be me!

What started as a left-field idea between my husband Aaron and me has turned into a firm plan that will see us shift to the King Country shortly after Christmas.

Of course the week that we announced we were shifting was the week where the 'wild west/horses galloping down the main street of Taumarunui' story was in the media so we've had plenty of entertaining feedback from our mates and Aaron's work colleagues!

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Ginny Dodunski; I've been a large animal vet with Totally Vets for most of my 15 years in practice, except for a couple of years working in Australia and North Taranaki.

I have always been interested in the 'big picture' of a farm rather than just animal health per se. This focus means my idea



Ginny Dodunski at the 2013 Sheep Congress

of a good time on a Friday night is to sit down with a cup of tea and catch up on the farming papers! And having been able to work alongside the likes of Trevor Cook for many years has given me the opportunity to get involved in plenty of advisory and extension work.

Working remotely from Hawkes Bay for the last three years has seen me take on some interesting projects - this year I am putting together an information package for goat farmers called 'Wormwise for Goats'; collating the current knowledge of best practice for this species, and hopefully a platform for further research and extension work to help goat farmers with worm management, which can be quite a challenge for them!

I'm really looking forward to getting back into 'real' vet work again in 2014 and meeting our Taumarunui clients. Our children Oscar (7) and Teagan (5) are going to be attending Ngakonui Valley School, and Aaron is looking forward to a new role in livestock procurement for Greenlea Meats. See you soon!

Ginny



Totally Vets current stock health

Dairy

With the bulls out and summer feed crops in, hopefully a chance soon for farm staff to take a breather.

It's been a good spring, but not without challenges. Down cows, lameness and young stock ill-thrift have been common issues. Many farms have also struggled to maintain pasture

quality. The threat of the tick-borne disease Theileriosis has added another challenge.

Now is an ideal opportunity to reflect on what could be improved for next spring.

Focus on feed and health planning to ensure cows are fully fed and milking. Keep track of young stock - good feed and an effective preventative health programme (including

7 Questions

1. What current potential animal health problem should you bear in mind if you hear your calves coughing?
2. What are 3 key potentially fatal diseases that vaccination can protect your working dog from?
3. How should the Campy vaccine be given - into the muscle or under the skin?
4. How many times should you give the Campy vaccine in the ewe's first year?
5. On average what is the cost of bringing a replacement heifer into the herd as a two year old?
6. When is the 2013 Totally Vets Client Christmas party?
7. Across a heifer replacement's rearing period, what is the average growth rate required to meet its minimum target weight at mating?

1. Lungworm
2. Parvo, Lepto, Kennel Cough
3. Under the skin
4. Twice, 4-8 weeks apart
5. \$1000+
6. 13th December
7. 0.6kg/day or 20kg/month

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.



From left: Nic Verhoek 2013 Manawatu Dairy Trainee of the Year, Richard McIntyre 2013 Manawatu Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year and Michael and Raewyn Hills 2013 Manawatu Farm Manager of the Year

NZ Dairy Industry Awards

Entries for the 2014 New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards are now open and will be accepted until December 20th 2013. The New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards are a great way to progress your career and better your business no matter what stage of farming you are at.

Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year and Farm Manager of the Year entrants have judges come on farm to appraise their business. Judges then provide valuable feedback as to how to they can gain better results from what they do, and the resources they have available to them on a day-to-day basis. Dairy Trainee of the Year entrants attend an off-farm practical and interview session and they too gain valuable feedback on career progression and their goals and aspirations within the industry.

Richard and Christine Sinclair are convening the Manawatu regional awards this year. They have found that since winning the Manawatu Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year in 2011, the benefits of entering the award continue long after judging has finished. "The feedback we received from entering the awards enabled us to structure our business in a more efficient and productive manner, from which we are now reaping the benefits. The networks and connections we have made from being involved in the awards have played a pivotal role in helping us get to where we are today."

The Manawatu Dairy Industry Awards winners will be announced at an awards dinner on Wednesday 12th March 2014 at the Awapuni Racecourse, Palmerston North. The three category winners will then go on to represent the Manawatu region at the National Awards to be held in Auckland in May 2014.

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the National Sharemilker of the Year competition and as such, promises to deliver an exciting awards programme. Entry forms for the New Zealand Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year, New Zealand Farm Manager of the Year and New Zealand Dairy Trainee of the Year can found be online at

www.dairyindustryawards.co.nz.



tracking weights) are needed to grow heifers well.

Monitor your bulk milk somatic cell count. Keep the teat-spray going and use your herd test information for early decision-making.

Get as much information as you can on your herd's repro performance. Plan to pregnancy-test early, at 12 to 14 weeks after your mating **start** date. This will make culling, dry-off and feed-planning decisions much easier.

Sheep & Beef

We have already seen our first outbreak of lungworm in 6-week old calves this season. This would more commonly occur after Christmas, and probably reflects the lack of a cold snap over the winter, which would have killed larvae on the pasture. So if you have coughing calves, bear lungworm in mind. It can be very difficult to differentiate from viral pneumonia. Treatment often requires an antibiotic and an appropriate drench.

The lamb drench has started to leave the shelves. Given the worminess of much of the stock over the winter, this might well carry through into this year's crop of lambs. Don't forget, if you don't know your drench resistance status or if it has been a while since you checked it, this is an ideal time to carry out a faecal egg count reduction test. There can be some major financial shortfalls if the drench that you are using is working at a reduced level on your property.



Fertility vaccines: where do they fit?

Ginny Dodunski

The biggest driver of profitability in a sheep-breeding enterprise is the number of lambs weaned. There is definitely money to be made in doing a good job with your cattle and finishing lambs, but the top 20% of farms do not have low lambing percentages!

Beef + Lamb Economic Service data for the Western North Island indicate the average lambing percentage for class 4 hill country (much of the Manawatu) was 125% last year, and 117% for class 3 hill country (harder hill; a good proportion of the King Country).

If these are the average, then around half the flocks are performing worse than 125% and 117% - you don't hear that admitted too often down at the Chelty on a Thursday night. So for a lot of farms, there is a big opportunity in lifting ewe performance. The key to lifting lambing percentage is never just one thing; it is always part of a package.

That package starts with the number of ewes that conceive with twins at mating. Lots of things impact on this, including mating date, body condition, feeding, genetics and presence of disease or deficiencies.

While it would be great to deal to all the limiting factors in one hit, this is never realistic, especially with genetics which take many years to filter down through your ewe flock.

Fertility vaccines such as Androvax® and Ovastim can help get around some of these negative influences immediately by boosting the number of eggs released by the ewe.

There are typically a range of responses between flocks, and scanning percentage can increase by up to 40% in some cases. 20% is quoted as the average and mostly the 'responses' we see would be around this point or a bit lower. So the likelihood of getting caught by surprise with a massive response is pretty low really. If your lambing percentage is under about 130%, the vast majority of the extra lambs you'll get will be twins and not triplets.

Once you've committed to treating ewes with a fertility vaccine, it's imperative that you also commit to two other things:

1. GETTING THE TIMING RIGHT.

This is really important, and if you get it wrong, you can end up with extra dry ewes, or having to mate later than you intended. For most flocks, the planning needs to start now; if you're using Androvax®, the two shots are best given 10 and 6 weeks prior to tupping, which for early-mated flocks, may mean the first shot is in December.

2. GETTING EVERYTHING ELSE AS CLOSE TO RIGHT AS POSSIBLE.

And you thought I only said two things! This means attention to having the flock in good order prior to tupping, feed management to start winter with good covers, a plan to ration the grass and ensure feed levels are increasing in the weeks prior to lambing. And you must scan so you know who the twinnings are.

We can help with all this, and who knows, you may get a very pleasant surprise with what your current ewes can do!

Early outbreaks of Barber's Pole worm

Ginny Dodunski

Barber's Pole worm (*Haemonchus contortus*) is one of the big bogeys of sheep farming. It can seem to strike without warning, though mostly we see cases in late summer and autumn while conditions remain warm.

In the last couple of years though, we have seen the odd case of it prior to Christmas, and this year, we saw our first case in early November. However this is not evidence enough for everyone to rush out in a panic and buy long-acting drenches right now!

Barber's Pole worm is a sub-tropically/tropically adapted parasite that feeds by damaging the abomasal wall and ingesting blood. With the right environmental conditions, and in the absence of effective management and control, 'outbreak' situations occur where

larval numbers on pasture rise rapidly; their ingestion by grazing sheep results in the 'sudden' appearance of ill-thrift, lethargy and deaths. In our most recent case, all that was seen was several dead lambs overnight. Scouring is not normally a feature unless other worms are involved too.

Where forage crops or other safer grazing are not available, most control in our area centres on use of long-acting drenches e.g. Exodus, Cydectin, Genesis Ultra, often in the absence of any hard information about whether it is really required at the time.

One of the problems with managing Barber's Pole in our district is the difficulty of predicting the seasonal onset of challenge. In 2004, we did a study which showed that there was no correlation between farms in the area for the timing and severity of Barber's Pole challenge, and even on the same farm, the relationship between burdens in the ewes and lambs was weak.

Anyone who's been caught by a decent Barber's Pole outbreak can be forgiven for thinking it's not worth taking the risk of leaving stock unprotected, but this does tend to result in drench over-use, and given that you want to minimise the use of long acting drenches for sustainability reasons, what can you do right now?

- A faecal egg count (FEC) of undrenched lambs, even while they're still on mum, can be a guide; the egg counts of unweaned lambs can vary enormously, and very high FECs could point to higher than normal Barber's Pole levels in some cases
- *Haemonchus* dipstick test - we have this available in the Feilding clinic. Interpreted with caution, in conjunction with FECs, it can help assess the risk. It is most reliable in lambs
- If you are handling lambs, look for paleness of gums and eye membrane. Look for 'bottle jaw' in any class of sheep
- Risk assessment
 - Likely level of pasture contamination - if you carried more lambs into winter than normal last season, contamination is likely to be higher
 - The mild winter will have allowed more Barber's Pole to survive than usual
 - Drenching history of hoggets and ewes as far back as winter
 - Grazing history

Talk to us - we can help you decide what monitoring you need to do to ensure you are not caught by surprise with an early outbreak.



Aimee (left) with friend Sue after crossing the finish line

Ironman Aimee

Chris Carter

Ironman competitions are events which most of us dismiss as being beyond our wildest dreams. A half marathon maybe but not 3.8 km of sea swimming, 180 km of biking and then a full marathon (42.2km). But for our HR Manager Aimee Perrett, it is what you do and Aimee is very good at it. The pinnacle of this event is the Ironman World Championships, held each year in Kona, Hawaii.

This event can only be entered by qualifying during the year at an Ironman competition

around the world. In New Zealand, there are currently two options - Ironman New Zealand, held every year in Taupo in March, and Ironman 70.3 Auckland, held in January (a half-Ironman distance).

Typically, you have to have come first or second in your age group to gain qualification, and this is open to any nationality, not just to New Zealanders. Aimee came third in her age group in Auckland, and second in Taupo. Both results qualified her to represent New Zealand in the World Champs.

In October, she returned to Kona to compete for a second time. In temperatures of 35 degrees plus wind and 80% humidity, Aimee delivered a personal best time of 11 hours 36 minutes and she was still able to smile at the end of this.

For the record Aimee is NZ's fastest female Ironman eventer for her age group this year.



Sheep quarantine drenching

Ginny Dodunski

The aim of quarantine drenching is to stop drench-resistant worms coming onto your property in bought-in stock. Or for most farms, to stop drench-resistant worms that are worse than the ones you've already got!

It is pretty common for most farms to have a minor to moderate level of resistance to the 'older' individual drench chemicals - BZs (white), levamisole (clear) and the mectin drenches as singles actives.

The worms you really don't want are those that are resistant to combinations, and/or moxidectin (Exodus, Cydectin). As we've discussed in recent articles, it appears moxidectin resistance is a lot more common than we might have thought.

And there are also a number of properties across the North Island where triple-combination resistance has been diagnosed. This means that if you are buying in finishing lambs or replacement ewes, there is a real risk of importing worms that are going to make yours harder to kill!

The need to get your quarantine drenching protocol dead right does vary from farm to farm. A breeding unit that buys in a handful of rams every year is low risk, as are some of the top finishing farms where the feed types

and stock policies are such that few lambs are drenched while they are in the system.

However if you know you couldn't get by without using drench, and you buy in a significant proportion of sheep (or goats), then having a water-tight quarantine protocol is a must, and should be the subject of a decent discussion with your friendly TVL sheep vet. It is more than just drenching them with liquid gold as they come off the truck!

While the principles of quarantine management have not changed a lot in the last 10 years, the recommended products certainly have.

When I started in practice, the quarantine drench of choice was one of the 'stronger' 'mectins eg abamectin or moxidectin. Given all we have learned since then, these products would be considered a poor choice for quarantine drenching nowadays.

Many farms now seem to be using triple combinations for quarantine drenching, and they certainly became the product of choice for this as soon as they were released in the early 2000s. For some situations, this may still be OK; eg drenching of bought-in rams where you are able to ascertain the status of the home farm, or a line of ewes from a known buyer where you can access their drench resistance information.

Where you are buying significant lines of stock of an unknown status, then a triple combination could now be a risky choice.

As you will know, there are two new drench products on the market (Zolvix and Startect) which have been useful choices for quarantine drenching as they both contain 'new' chemicals to which there was no known resistance.

However, we can now report that there is at least one case of severe resistance to Zolvix in goats, on a property where it was used as the only drench in quite an intensive way.

The resistance in this situation developed in apparently less than two years. Subsequent work has found that the dose required for Zolvix to be properly effective in goats is three times the sheep dose. Few goat farmers who are using it would be dosing at this rate. It must be emphasised that the manufacturer never recommended that Zolvix be used in goats, and that it is not registered for use in goats.

Any new drench chemical that is used intensively on a farm without applying the known tools for managing resistance, is going to fail at some point. That Zolvix is a single active means it was always going to fail faster when used this way. There are no reports of failure of Startect at this point, but there is also no guarantee that everyone who is using it is doing so in a 'sustainable' manner.

Last year, when I wrote about quarantine drenching, I mentioned that the Australian 'best practice' recommendation for a quarantine product is 'a combination of at least four unrelated actives, one of which should be one of the new actives'.

Has the time arrived for us to be applying this recommendation in New Zealand? I would say in some cases yes, it is.

But you still need to get your protocol right, and this is where we can be of great help. Check out our March 2012 quarantine drenching article on our website (under [Subscribe/Past Editions](#)) and make some time to talk to one of us to ensure you get it right.

Growing good young stock

Lindsay Rowe

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

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

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

Increased wastage: only 67% of calves identified as replacements for the herd may calve as three-year olds, meaning there is a 33% loss rate between rearing and completion of the

first lactation. The lighter the heifer, the greater the chance she will be lost from the herd.

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

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

Once in the herd, failure to cycle becomes the major problem as these new entrants struggle to settle into the herd hierarchy and successfully compete for the available feed.

The problem is worse when they are below target weight to start with and actually have an increased feed demand just to support the extra growth required. By comparison, well-grown heifers will have a reproductive performance equal to that of mature cows.

Liveweight targets are best calculated as a percentage of the liveweight of your mature herd.

These are **minimum** target weights and require an average growth rate of 0.6kg EVERY day for the total rearing period or 20kg per month. To achieve these growth rates, management needs to focus on:

- Efficient calf-rearing through to weaning
- Generous dry matter intakes after weaning allowing for maintenance, liveweight gain and then pregnancy, especially the last 4 months
- High quality feed - energy (ME), protein % and digestibility
- An efficient worm control programme
- Trace element sufficiency (copper, cobalt and selenium levels)
- Appropriate disease control and vaccination status

Discuss these points with your vet to make sure you are able to produce replacement heifers capable of lifting the overall performance of your herd.



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

What the heck is that poking out?

Helen Sheard

Vaginal prolapse in dogs is quite striking - and hard to miss. If you haven't seen one before, it is akin to a ewe with a bearing.

It can begin as a small fleshy mass coming out of the vulva, but can enlarge to anything

up to 10cm in diameter. It is slightly different to a ewe bearing; in dogs, it isn't the inverted vagina coming out in a tube - it is actually a massive swelling of a gland on the floor of the vagina, which then pokes out like a giant growth.

Similar to ewes, prolapses in bitches sometimes enlarge to a point where they prevent urination; this is a serious state of affairs and needs to be remedied as soon as possible.

The swelling of the gland is in response to hormones when the bitch comes on heat. Some bitches are overly sensitive to these



Vaginal prolapse

Farm dog vaccinations

It's worth remembering that many of the diseases we vaccinate our dogs against can kill, irrespective of whether your dog is your pet or your prized working dog. Whereas a child with mumps will almost certainly get better, an unvaccinated dog that contracts parvovirus, for example, can easily die. Only vaccination can prevent these diseases.

WHAT DISEASES DO YOU NEED TO PROTECT AGAINST?

Parvovirus (parvo) is of particular importance. It causes severe bloody diarrhoea and is often deadly, especially in young pups.

Infected dogs shed parvovirus in their faeces for three weeks or more. The virus can then survive for months in the environment and be quickly spread between dogs and farms from shoes, clothing and vehicles.

Unfortunately, veterinarians and farmers around the country still regularly deal with outbreaks of parvo in unvaccinated farm dogs. Puppies (under the age of 6 months) have the highest risk of contracting a parvo infection.

This is particularly devastating when it is so simple to prevent with vaccination.

Early diagnosis of parvo can increase the chances of survival. Treatment involves hospitalisation and intensive care. Even then, there is no guarantee of survival.

It is very costly from a financial and emotional perspective but also from lost productivity.

Kennel cough is a highly contagious disease caused by several different organisms and results in a persistent dry cough. This may also lead to retching, lethargy, loss of appetite and a fever. These symptoms can have a severe impact on working and competitive dogs. Recovery may take several weeks.

Farm working dogs are at high risk. An outbreak of kennel cough in your dog team is costly and difficult to treat. It will affect the productivity of the infected working dogs.

Leptospirosis (lepto) can be contracted from the urine of brown rats. Signs include a high temperature, severe thirst, lethargy, diarrhoea and jaundice. Although the disease has been prevalent in the Northern and Central regions of the North Island, it has recently been diagnosed in the Manawatu and Wairarapa. Infection can result in renal and liver malfunction, and if not treated early, is usually fatal.

Lepto can be transmitted to humans, where it can cause a serious illness called Weil's disease.

WHY IS YOUR DOG TEAM AT RISK OF INFECTION?

- It is impossible to completely isolate your dogs. There are many external contacts which may introduce infection.
- A large number of pups and young dogs. The majority of parvo cases occur in pups less than 6 months old.
- Living and working as teams. Groups of animals have a high risk for fast spread of infection.
- Mobile population. There are many opportunities for infected or unvaccinated dogs to move into or out of your team. These include times when your dog team membership changes, contact with other dogs at dog trials and others dogs visiting on-farm.

WHY VACCINATE YOUR WORKING DOGS?

Your dogs are valuable. They contribute a significant amount of labour on your farm, which means that the cost of a disease outbreak is devastating. Vaccination is the only way to protect your dogs from disease.

Dog vaccination is simple and cost-effective. Protect your investment - talk to Totally Vets about vaccinating your dogs today. Working dog vaccinations can be done at the same time as a farm visit.

Content courtesy of MSD Animal Health

hormones and the gland swells out of proportion. It is a problem seen only in entire (not spayed) bitches and so we do see it most often in working dogs. Huntaways seem to be over-represented - Heading dogs don't have this problem nearly as often.

Once the bitch comes off heat, the drop in hormones causes the gland to shrink; sometimes however it doesn't completely reduce back to its original size. A bitch that does this once will do this every heat. And it is hereditary - so affected bitches shouldn't be bred from.

The best option for treatment is desexing (spaying) - removal of the uterus and ovaries permanently removes the source of the hormones. However we can't perform this surgery until four weeks after their heat ends. This is because when bitches are on heat, their uterus is full of engorged blood vessels and is very fragile. It therefore has the potential for massive haemorrhage - which we are not at all fond of during surgery.

Treatment in the meantime is based on keeping the prolapse clean, dry and lubricated so things like tail hairs and kennel floors don't cause any damage. We can also use some

hormone-suppressing tablets to try and end the heat sooner.

Please do not try and suture the prolapse in. Because it is a mass rather than actually being part of the vaginal wall, the bitch will strain to push it out again, and all kinds of horrible ripping out of sutures can occur.

If the prolapse is small and not bothering the bitch, keeping it clean with warm water and applying an obstetrical lubricant (calving or lambing lube is fine) is fine. If it is larger and becoming rubbed and irritated, or the bitch is uncomfortable, please don't hesitate to bring her into the clinic for a check-up.



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