



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

APRIL 2014



Hayley Hoogendyk, Dairy Trainee of the year, Duncan and Kim Fraser, Sharemilker/Equity farmer of the year and Sam Ebbett, Farm Manager of the year.

Lines at the ready!

An invitation goes out to all of our clients to join us on 12th April at the Wanganui Sailing Club, Wanganui, to enter our 10th Annual Totally Vets Fishing Tournament.

The format, rules and regulations remain the same as in previous years. Launching is from the Castlecliff boat ramp any time after daybreak, with weigh-in at 3.00pm followed by a BBQ at the Wanganui Sailing Club.

Being the 10th anniversary, Totally Vets is putting up a significant one-off prize for the boat that catches a Kahawai weighing the closest to the average weight for Kahawai caught during the day. Additional prizes will be given for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd heaviest Kahawai caught on the day.

Entry forms are available at our Feilding, Awapuni and Taumarunui branches and need to be submitted by Friday 4th April. We look forward to seeing you there!

Dairy Industry Awards

Lindsay Rowe

Last week several of us from Totally Vets had the privilege of attending the Dairy Industry Regional Awards Dinner in Palmerston North where excellence in dairy farming was showcased and celebrated. The winners now go on to represent this region at the national competition to be held at the Sky Convention Centre in Auckland on 9th May.

This prestigious competition has been in place for 25 years, with many of the past winners progressing on to farm ownership and to leadership positions within the industry. The competition is judged at three levels - Dairy Trainee, Farm Manager and Sharemilker/Equity Farmer.

The Managers and Sharemilker/Equity Farmers are required to make a two hour presentation detailing all aspects of their farming business. They are expected to have a

working knowledge of pasture management, an understanding of the prudent use of nutrients and the disposal of effluent. They need to have well thought out and applied staff management procedures, a detailed understanding of the financial aspects of a dairy farm business and the various ways to mitigate the risks to that business. They are also expected to have clear goals of where they are heading and how they plan to get there.

Entrants impressing the preliminary judges go through to the next round and are required to do it all again for the "finals" judges. I had the privilege of judging again this year and was impressed with the talent and the passion for farming that is present in our region. To prepare a presentation such as this takes an awful lot of work to get it completed.

While the profile that this competition brings to those that do well, and while the network and friendships that develop are all valuable, the real value from entering this competition is the focus that each competitor is forced to bring to their farming business and the increased understanding of their business that arises from this.

So, go on, have a go next year!

For a full list of the regional winners and details of the local field days go to <http://www.dairyindustryawards.co.nz>



Totally Vets current stock health

Dairy

April is a month of drying off for a lot of farmers (if not already done, your vet will shortly be contacting you to complete your dry cow therapy consult). Cows need 30 days to put on one body condition score with very little going on in the last month of pregnancy, so be sure to dry off in plenty of time to allow adequate weight gain. This is also important in

relation to milk production for next season and for calving dates the following season.

Lepto vaccinating should be under way, going into the risk period of wet conditions during autumn and winter.

Facial eczema (FE) still needs your attention. Keep assessing the need for FE preventative treatment, especially if you are asking your stock to graze deeper into your pasture base

HA HA

To put smiles on the dials of our dairy farmers...

Q Why did the cow cross the road?

A To get to the udder side.

Q What has four legs and goes "Oom, Oom"?

A A cow walking backwards!

And a few for the hill country battlers...

Q Where do sheep get their hair cut?

A At the baa-baa shop.

Q Where did the sheep go on vacation?

A The baaaahamas.

And for the horse lovers...

Q Where do horses live?

A In the neigh-bourhood.

Q What is a horse's favorite sport?

A Stable tennis!

And last but not least a final one for the pigs...

Q What do you give a pig with a rash?

A Oinkment.

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Working dog snippets

Helen Sheard

It has been estimated that there are 200,000 working farm dogs in New Zealand, second only to Russia. The first working dogs were British Border Collies brought over with shepherds in the 1800's. They were then mixed with other breeds to produce the classic Huntaway and Heading dogs.

BACKING FARM DOGS

A recent survey by Australian Vet Liz Arnott found that herding dogs in Australia perform \$40,000 worth of work over their lifetime, while costing only \$7,700. Liz calculated this as a five-fold return on investment. At Massey University the Centre for Service and Working Dog Health and Research has been funding research projects on disease and injury in working dogs, and how they can be

best avoided or treated. A great thing for farm dogs, who have really been ignored up until now.

WHEN A BIG HEART IS A BAD THING

Some trial work has found that Huntaways may be predisposed to a heart disease called dilated cardiomyopathy. The cause of this disease is as yet unknown. The chambers of the heart dilate and the muscle becomes thinner, resulting in a much less efficient pump. Signs of heart disease can include tiring easily, losing weight, noisy breathing and coughing. A large trial is currently underway in Taihape to find out the prevalence of this disease in Huntaways.

THE EYES HAVE IT

Retinal disease in working dogs was recognised in the late 1980's. It was found that some of the lesions were caused by migrating worm larvae that had got lost and ended up in the tissue of the eyes. Regular worming has reduced the number of dogs going blind, and it is recommended to give your dogs a broad spectrum wormer every three months. Reducing worm burden can also be achieved by regularly getting rid of faeces and feeding dogs in bowls rather than off the ground.

SEED DISEASE

Barley grass awns are the bane of many dogs and owners lives, especially the poor shaggy Beardies. Normally we see grass awns in feet, ears and occasionally eyes. However they can work their way a lot deeper. There have been cases of encephalitis (inflammation in the brain tissue) and lung abscesses caused by migrating grass awns.



where the concentrations of toxic spores are highest.

In the young stock, keep up your regular parasite preventative drenching at 28 days apart as autumn is Trichs (Black scours) season.

Autumn is a prudent time for trace mineral testing. Levels can be assessed by blood testing, liver biopsies or from liver samples through the works. Talk to your vet about the best option for your stock.

Sheep and Beef

As for dairy, autumn is the season for Trichs and the same advice applies as given previously. Haemonchus (Barbers pole) should be a diminishing issue, so think about changing your drench to one that will protect against Trichs. Continue to quarantine drench any brought in stock. Autumn is also the peak period for worm egg output and is when we see most clinical parasitism. Remember the earlier young stock are off farm, the less worms that will be passed onto pasture that can

overwinter till next spring. If you're wondering when to stop drenching, bring us in some faecal egg samples to test.

Those farmers who mate hoggets, keep them well fed through the autumn, think about ram ratios and the use of teasers to help achieve maximum conception rates. Same applies to those who have later mating dates for their mixed-age ewes. Hoggets require vaccinating for clostridial disease, toxoplasmosis and campylobacter if not done already.



From the horse's mouth

Lucy Russell

Now is a great time to get your horses teeth seen-to before the winter is upon us, and in preparation for next season.

Horses have "hypsodont" teeth, with long roots embedded in the bone of the jaw. This means that the teeth erupt continuously throughout their life. They do this at a rate of about 3-4 mm per year, to keep up with the normal wear caused by constant grinding of coarse feed which horses are exposed to under natural conditions. To chew this coarse feed there is a sideways, grinding component to the way the horse chews which wears the "occlusal surface" (the surface where the upper and lower teeth meet) down evenly. This means that an average horse, under ideal conditions, has enough tooth to erupt in this way for approximately 25 years.

The way we keep and feed horses now is quite different to the conditions that they have

evolved to live under. By exposing horses to a less constant supply of coarse feed throughout the day and feeding concentrates, which are generally easier to chew, we change the way the teeth wear. This means that abnormalities in dental wear and other dental problems often occur.

With a thorough knowledge of equine health, including dental anatomy and associated abnormalities, your veterinarian is the best person to complete a thorough dental examination of your horse and address any issues identified. From there your vet will advise the best plan for ongoing management. As a general rule horses with minor dental issues require 12 monthly dental attention. In other cases more frequent visits may be recommended.

At the same time as you have your horses teeth assessed, a full health check can be completed and a vaccination plan started or any booster vaccinations administered. Get your horse all set for the winter. Please call Totally Vets to book a dental, health check and vaccination plan today!

Calendar Competition 2014

Gaye Stein

Entries are now being taken for our Totally Vets calendar photo competition.

Children who attend primary or intermediate schools within the catchment area serviced by Totally Vets, and are aged between 5 and 14 years of age (Years 1-8), are eligible to enter.

Thirteen pictures will be chosen to feature with three great prizes up for grabs. The top prize winner takes home a camera to the value of \$300 for themselves, as well as a \$200 donation for their school. The first runner up will receive \$100 for themselves plus a \$200 donation to their school, and the second runner up will receive \$50 for themselves plus a \$150 donation to their school.

Photos are to be farm or animal themed and the competition runs from 1 March to 30 September 2014. Entry forms may be obtained from your nearest Totally Vets branch, from your school, or can be downloaded from our website.

Changes at Totally Vets

Catherine Toyne

On the 1 April we made the **change to a new business software package** (Vision) and with this change we have taken the opportunity to revamp our invoices/statements.

This month all account holders will receive a mock-up statement which will explain the layout changes. The changes have been made to make the statements easier to read but if you require assistance don't hesitate to give us a call.

For our Awapuni customers we have made **changes to the way in which we are handling our telephone calls**; all calls are now being answered through the Feilding clinic. You will still call the clinic numbers you are used to:

- Awapuni - 06 356 5011
- Feilding - 06 323 6161

Your call will be answered by a Totally Vets staff member. We haven't contracted this service out to a third party or gone off-shore and you won't go through an automatic answer phone system before being answered by a person!

We are working hard to bed in the new approach with staff dedicated to phone work. We welcome your feedback.



Just like riding a bike

Ginny Dodunski

It's a hot, hot, hot, King Country afternoon and a swarm of flies are trying to land on my arms. The 15 month bull that looked so obviously crook when I talked his owner into shooting him for a post mortem is now looking pretty damned normal from the inside!

Having said "We'll learn waaaay more by opening him up than we will by taking blood tests", I am struggling to see what the problem is. Am I starting to sweat? You bet, and it's not because of the heat. After around seven years of juggling motherhood, extension and advisory work, and the odd weekend on duty, these little moments of doubt are part and parcel of returning to 'real' vet work in Taumarunui!

Several minutes later I take the heart and lungs out of the bull to get a better look. The lungs look fine, but maybe that heart is a funny shape? I cut into one side of it - normal. Rats. Then I cut into the other side - what the! - the inner wall looks like it is made of dry cheese. We have found the problem; an infection that probably started on the heart valve (from a navel infection maybe?) has abscessed right into the muscle of the heart.

No wonder the bull looked so poor. Every time that heart beat probably only half the required amount of blood was being pumped forward. The client no doubt thought I was a little strange for being so excited by a cheesy abscess in a bull's heart!

So, I am finding Taumarunui a fantastic place to work! All the clients I have met so far have been great, take note Manawatu dairy farmers that every dairy client I have pregnancy scanned for has given me a cuppa or lunch ☺. So aside from the sore muscles as I get used to hundreds of pregnancy tests again, and having to learn some new drugs and approaches in small animal work, it really is just like riding a bike!

Gossip

Congratulations to **Natasha** Kirk who recently graduated as a fully fledged vet nurse. A fantastic achievement, well done Tash!

Sarah Clarke's stallion "RL Simply the Best" won Grand Champion Stallion of the Year at the recent Quarterhorse Nationals and **Lucy**

Russell placed 2nd in the recent Elite Equine Young Dressage Horse 4 year old class with her horse "HPH Prospero" at Bates NZ National Dressage Champs.

Charmaine played for Manawatu 35yr women's masters hockey team at the National tournament in Wellington in March, coming away with the silver medal. Charmaine was

then selected for the New Zealand 35yr women's team. An outstanding achievement Charms!

Barny has been away on a deep-sea Marlin fishing expedition in the Taranaki and came home with a lot of credit card receipts and a story about "how we hooked one big fish that got away!"

The dry period... the bigger picture!

Fraser Abernathy

The dry period is more than simply when cows are given a break from producing milk! Drying off is a key time of year for your herd and can be a valuable period for assessment, reflection and implementation of key actions for next season.

BODY CONDITION SCORE (BCS)

What is the BCS of your herd? Rather than just the average score, do you know how many cows you have in the "at-risk" category (i.e. below BCS 4.0)? What is your plan to achieve target of BCS 5.0 in these cows by the

planned start of calving? For example a cow with BCS 3.5 will, at good feeding levels, take 100 to 130 days to achieve BCS 5.0. Have you allowed enough time and do you have adequate feed resources on hand?

WINTER FEEDING

What have you got to offer your dry cows and is this enough? Have you allowed for wastage of at least 30% of feed offered (likely under wet conditions)? And, if you do have the feed, does it actually meet the cow's nutritional requirements? Too commonly many herds winter on insufficient amounts of high fibre low energy feeds making it virtually impossible to gain condition if this is the cow's sole source of feed.

TRACE ELEMENTS

Dry off is also time to check your herd's trace element status using samples liver biopsies (from cows staying with the herd or from cull cows through the works) and/or blood tests. The majority of herds sampled last autumn had sub-optimal selenium levels and copper

levels are likely to fall to their lowest over winter OR are you feeding lots of palm kernel and at risk of copper toxicity? Knowing your trace element status and correcting any issues now will save you a lot of problems next season.

Also, remember dry cows need magnesium and if cows are getting a high percentage of maize in their diet then salt and phosphate may need to be added as well. If mineral issues are not addressed then it can result in a lot of metabolic problems the following spring.

PARASITE CONTROL

Although most mature dairy cows have sufficient immunity to keep any parasite burden under control there may still be a production effect. So talk to your vet about your individual situation and if a drench at drying off, or during the transition period, is advisable.

So remember what you do (or don't do) at dry off can have a major impact on next seasons' production and profitability!

Setting up for next spring

Trevor Cook

Feed is king, and the vagaries of the spring are significantly minimised by having enough feed.

This can only happen if enough is taken into the winter. Consequently 1st May pasture cover is one of those critical factors that drives production. What that pasture cover needs to be will, for many farmers, be based on what experience has taught them. But for just as

many others it can really only come from some calculation of animal needs verses feed supply. Actions that can be taken to accumulate that pre-winter cover are de-stocking, weaning cows early or application of nitrogen. Starting early to get to that target is vital!

Equally as important as the pasture cover is a grazing plan for the allocation of feed until the spring. It is difficult to alter the supply once we get to spring, so managing what we have until then is vital. Putting some key dates around animal requirements is very useful in planning that feed allocation. The absolute key one for ewes is that, from 35 days before lambing starts, ewes carrying multiples do not lose condition before lambing. The same

applies to cows, not losing condition in the month before calving.

Cow and ewe body condition is another key component of setting up the spring. At the extremes we know that very light ewes and cows have a much lower level of production and a much higher death rate. But even outside the extremes, there is a production cost to being light and it is rare for a ewe or cow to be in better condition coming out of the winter than going in. So "rescuing" light ewes and cows before the winter is feed worth spending. Again, the earlier that this process starts the easier that it is!

Planning the outcomes is safer than hoping for them.

March saw the welcome return of **Colin Wakelin** to the Awapuni production animal team after a three month stint in Vietnam. Great to have him back on board!

Carin and her nine year old son **Rik** head across to Amsterdam to visit their home away from home in Castricum. We wish them a safe and enjoyable trip.

On Tuesday 18th March we held our annual Golf Competition. The Ambrose team achieving the best net score over the day was comprised of **Jeff Dickens**, **Helen Waugh**, **Neil McKechnie** and **Dillon Smith**. They came away with a Ping golf shirt to the value of \$80 each. The highlight of the day was **Kevin Small's** hole-in-one on the Par-3, Hole 11 at Feilding Golf Course. Thanks to all our sponsors who helped to make the day possible.



Jeff Dickens, Helen Waugh, Neil McKechnie and Dillon Smith (absent).

Cows REALLY DO need a dry period!

Mark Eames

The dry period can be thought of as a recharging period - a chance for the udder and cow to rest and recuperate before the next lactation period.

The recommended dry period for dairy cows worldwide is a minimum of 6 weeks but preferably 8 weeks. This is the optimum duration to ensure maximum milk production in the following lactation.

There are some key changes occurring within the udder during the dry period. The specialised cells that make milk decline in number early on in the dry period and then new tissue is laid

down ready for the next lactation. It takes a full 60 days for the milk producing cells in the udder to be optimally renewed. If cows are not dried off at all, the next lactation yield may be 25-30% lower. Studies have found significant decreases in lactation yield with a 4 week dry period versus 8 weeks.

The other key physiological process occurring at the start of the dry period is the formation of a keratin plug in the teat canal. This is critical for preventing new infections over the remainder of the dry period. More than 20% of quarters do not have a keratin plug 6 weeks after dry off.

In New Zealand most cows will be dried off longer than 8 weeks, but in some split calving herds keeping track of each cow's dry period length can be difficult. Care is required to ensure that all cows get the required 6-8 weeks off.

Shortening the dry period may be tempting in some herds and/or in certain seasons as an increase in days in milk can be good for the current season's total production. The down side to this is the risk of a lower milk production in the following lactation as the

udder has not had the adequate recharging time.

The dry period is also a good chance to cure existing intra-mammary infections with long-acting antibiotics. The cost and hassle of withholding milk is avoided and higher concentrations of drug can be maintained for longer periods. There are a number of strategies for dry cow therapy ranging from the whole-herd or "blanket" approach, to part-herd treatment or dry-cow therapy in combination with teat sealant. These decisions should be made in conjunction with your vet at the time of your dry-cow consult.

Dry cows should be checked for mastitis 14 days after the last milking and then every 3 weeks throughout the dry period. To avoid breaking the keratin plug, only squeeze the teat if mastitis is suspected.

In summary, dairy cows require a dry period of at least 6 weeks, but preferably 8 weeks to ensure optimum renewal of cells in the udder for maximum milk production in the following lactation. Dry cow therapy antibiotics should be selected in consultation with your vet.

2014 Dry Cow Therapy Products

Chris Carter

Dry-cow therapy and the use of teat sealants are an important aid for minimising the occurrence of mastitis and the use of these products sits alongside good nutrition, having an efficient and well maintained milking plant, and well trained milkers.

This year we will be stocking a range of products. The choice reflects our experience with the product's effectiveness and the back-up that the pharmaceutical company provides. Although there are many products with the same active (antibiotic) their performance

varies due to the formulation in which the antibiotic is suspended.

DRY COW THERAPY PRODUCTS

Product	Active Ingredient	Minimum Time Prior to Calving for Treatment
Cepravin® Dry Cow	Cephalonium - 1st Generation	49 days
Dryclox Xtra	Cloxacillin & Ampillicin	49 days
Orbenin Enduro	Cloxacillin	35 days
Bovaclox™ Dry Cow	Cloxacillin & Ampillicin	30 days

Our most widely used dry-cow product is Cepravin® Dry Cow. This is a long-acting product which will cure sub-clinical infection at dry off as well as providing protection from infection that enters the udder in the lead-up to calving.

TEAT SEALANTS

These products are an option for those who wish to limit use of antibiotics. Teat sealant will not cure existing infections so is not suitable for high cell count cows or those that suffered clinical mastitis during the previous lactation. It is the best choice for those cows that have had persistently low cell counts and is also useful for first-calving heifers.

A significant advantage of teat sealant is that its protective benefit is effective for at least 16 weeks and possibly longer, making it suitable for low cell count cows that are dried off early or calve late.

This year we will be stocking both Teatseal® and Intercept™.

At your dry-cow consult the best options for the management of mastitis in your herd will be discussed. If you wish to purchase a product that is not in our standard range, this can be arranged.



Leptospirosis in cattle

Sarah Clarke

There are greater than 200 known types (known as serovars) of *Leptospira* bacteria, luckily only a handful of these cause the potentially fatal disease “Leptospirosis” in people and animals.

Each serovar has its own preferred maintenance host species (e.g. *L.harjovovis* in cattle, *L.pomona* in pigs and *L.copenhageni* in rats). Although infection is common, symptoms are mild when the serovar infects its usual maintenance host. However, when a serovar infects an accidental host (e.g. *L. pomona* infects cattle), this causes severe disease and even death. The most common serovars to accidentally infect cattle are *pomona* and *copenhageni*. More importantly, leptospirosis in people also causes severe illness and potentially death, and NZ has one of the highest rates of human leptospirosis in the developed world.

As leptospirosis is a recognised occupational hazard by Occupational Safety and Health, farm owners are responsible for identifying and taking steps to protect their staff. Employer expectations are clearly outlined in the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, and a robust vaccination program (e.g.

Leptosure®) is part of these obligations on dairy farms.

Leptospirosis is transmitted by the bacteria (leptospire) in urine splashes, or urine-contaminated water or mud coming into contact with mucous membranes (most commonly mouth and eyes), or skin abrasions. The bacteria circulates in the blood for days to weeks, and then localises in the kidneys where it is shed in the urine for up to 18 months in untreated animals. After being passed in the urine, leptospire survive well outside the host in cool, moist, pH neutral conditions. The main sources of infection are stagnant water, contaminated effluent and carrier animals.

What are the symptoms in cattle? When *L. hardjovovis* infects cattle, it causes a mild, chronic disease associated with insidious low grade production losses. When *L. pomona* or *L. copenhageni* infect cattle, the bacteria reproduce exponentially, rapidly causing a blood poisoning which leads to redwater, and failure of the liver and kidneys. *L. pomona* has an extra toxin, haemolysin, which causes jaundice, anaemia and redwater.

How can I prevent infection? Vaccination of calves at 4-6 weeks of age is wise (e.g. at time of disbudding, with a booster 4 weeks later). This eliminates the risk of early infection, calves developing redwater and acting as shedders that will infect other stock and potentially humans. A booster at 6-9 months age will realign them with the rest of the herd, and ensure immunity is greatest going into the autumn/winter which is the highest challenge period.

Vaccination of livestock does not prevent the bacteria from circulating in the blood, but does prevent the symptoms associated with illness and the shedding of bacteria in the urine. This latter point is key to human health, as this is an important risk intervention for employers.

Which vaccine, what is the difference?

There are numerous vaccination options. Some products contain two serovars while others contain three. There are also some differences in recommendations between products in regards to the minimum age of calves. All stock require an initial shot, a booster 4-6 weeks later with 12 monthly boosters. Please call the team at Totally Vets to discuss which product may be best for you.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS:

- All calves should be vaccinated at least once by 12 weeks age, the booster is due 4-6 weeks later.
- For ease of management, calves should ideally receive a third vaccination at 6-9 months age (as their first annual booster) so that they are then in line with the herd the following autumn.
- Never allow the interval between vaccinations to exceed 12 months.
- Avoid keeping pigs on dairy farms where possible.
- No vaccine will work on stock that are currently infected.
- Totally Vets decants vaccines in small amounts suitable for small block holders.

YOUR GUIDE TO A GREAT DRY OFF



1.

HAVE THE FOLLOWING READY BEFORE DRYING OFF:

- Experienced staff
- Something to record numbers on – ready to be transferred to your animal health records
- Spray can for marking treated cows
- Teatwipes or cotton balls soaked in 70% alcohol
- Teatspray and sprayer
- Plenty of time (allow about 20 cows/person/hour to do the job thoroughly)



2.

BEFORE TREATMENT

- Finish milking, then bring the cows back in for treatment
- Mark cows to be treated with spray can
- Record ID numbers of treated cows and the date of treatment



3.

CLEANING TEATS

- Clean the teats furthest away from you first, then the teats nearest to you
- Use wipes or cotton wool balls to thoroughly scrub the teat end clean
- Use one wipe per teat, or additional wipes as needed, until they come away clean



4.

INSERTING THE SYRINGE

- Use the dual-tip syringe to select your desired insertion length (partial insertion is recommended)
- Treat teats closest to you first, then those furthest away
- Carefully insert the syringe tip into the teat end, taking care not to damage the teat
- Infuse the full contents of the syringe into the teat



5.

AFTER TREATMENT

- Spray teats thoroughly with an effective teatspray
- Put cows out onto clean pasture
- Check daily in the paddock for signs of mastitis, but don't bring the herd into the shed for at least 7-10 days



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