



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

JUNE 2015



Changes in phone calls to Awapuni

On 1st July we will return to answering calls to our Awapuni clinic number, 06 356 5011, **AT** our Awapuni clinic.

Feedback has been consistent that on the phone you like to talk to those you are familiar with from your visits to the clinic. After a year of working with the current system we acknowledge that a change is required.

Our two telephone centres in Feilding and Awapuni will continue to work closely together to ensure calls are answered and managed promptly. It will also ensure we have cover for seasonal peaks and holidays, and can provide the best customer service to you.

Parasite control in your dairy herd

Sarah Clarke

The assessment of parasite burden in adult cattle is challenging compared to in young stock.

While faecal egg count (FEC) testing gives a good indication of parasite burden in young animals, this test does not provide accurate information in adult cattle. This is because the immune system of adult cattle can suppress egg production by worms, and inhibited larvae sleeping in the gut wall do not produce eggs.

A combined analysis of 87 studies on drenching adult dairy cattle revealed that eighty percent of these herds experienced a positive production effect from a drench treatment. The benefit ranged from a 0 to 2.1 litre increase in milk production per cow per day. The range in these values likely reflects differences in herd parasitism levels, farm systems and location, production levels and timing of the drench administration.

Factors that may increase the likelihood of a positive response to drench treatment on your farm include:

- Systems where calves are raised on the dairy platform after weaning
- Pasture based systems, particularly involving cows with high production potential
- If your farm has been mainly used to graze young stock prior to dairy conversion, it may take several years for the pasture contamination to decline

The analysis above suggested that the greatest production benefit (and resulting economic advantage) occurred when cows were treated at calving or in early lactation; when approaching peak production. Treatment during the dry period may also be beneficial, but care must be taken around meat withholding periods, particularly for bobby calves. Winter grazing plans can influence the best timing of drench treatment. For example cows to be grazed on crop over winter would benefit from treatment before transition onto crop, while cows wintering on a run-off may be exposed to high pasture contamination and benefit from treatment pre-calving.

If you would like to discuss the likely benefit of drenching your herd then give your vet a call today.



Totally Vets current stock health

Deer

Scanning of hinds is a useful management tool to get rid of unproductive mouths. If considering this, remember the window for scanning is at least 30 days after stag removal, and not more than 120 days after the stag was introduced.

Dairy

Those with autumn calving cows seem to have had a really good run as this draws to an end. Spring calving cows are nearing the end of their lactation and again there doesn't appear to be any overwhelming animal health issues at the moment.

HA HA

"Johnnie."

"Yes, teacher."

"If there are twenty sheep in a field, and one gets out through a hole in the fence, how many sheep are left in the field?"

"None, teacher."

"Johnnie, there are still nineteen sheep left in the field. Obviously you don't know arithmetic."

"Sorry, teacher, but I do know arithmetic. Obviously you don't know sheep."



Cows, calves and rotavirus

Helen Mather

Calving may still seem a long way off but decisions made now could help ensure your season gets off to a smooth start, without the added hassles of scours in your calves.

Rotavirus is still New Zealand's most significant cause of calf scours, but other pathogens include E. coli, Coronavirus, Salmonella, Cryptosporidia, Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) and Coccidia. Many of the causative agents of diarrhoea are shed by cows around calving and then multiplied many fold when shed by subsequently infected calves. Any calf-rearing facility, especially the larger ones, provides ample opportunity for diarrhoea pathogens to spread quickly.

A scours outbreak can cause a huge amount of stress at an already busy time of year. It is labour intensive, expensive and emotionally draining trying to nurse scouring calves back to health. Some will likely die and, of those surviving, there is often permanent damage to

the gut lining and such calves never seem to reach their full potential as adults. Affected calves are also more vulnerable to other infections.

Fortunately, with a well planned calf-rearing programme that includes good hygiene, vaccination of your herd with calf scour vaccine and good colostrum management, you can minimise the likelihood of calf scours.

Calf scour vaccines, given to pregnant cows three to twelve weeks PRIOR to calving, include Rotavec® Corona and/or Scourguard®. Both of these vaccines provide excellent protection against Rotavirus, E. coli and Coronavirus. Use of them has aided many farms to eliminate or greatly reduce the extent and severity of calf scour problems. However, it is vital to remember the **protective antibodies are passed on to calves through feeding colostrum milk so vaccination is pointless without good colostrum feeding.**

While much of the focus is on dairy calves, beef cattle also benefit from vaccination as it is very difficult to separate and treat scouring beef calves.

Planning ahead is key, so call the clinic now to order your vaccine to ensure the correct timing of vaccination for your herd.

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When to dry off to ensure you allow enough time to reach the critical body condition score (BCS) targets is the next big decision. In case anyone has forgotten, target BCS for mixed age cows is 5.0, and 5.5 for first or second calvers. The dry period still remains the best time to deal with those high somatic cell count cows. Hopefully your vet has discussed your dry period strategy for mastitis management with you. If not give them a call and talk this through.

Now is also a good time to do liver biopsies to check trace element status going into late winter/early spring, and hence calving. Alternatively testing can be done on cull cows at the works.

Sheep and Beef

The very mild autumn conditions have given strength to some animal health issues that would have typically disappeared by May.

We are still seeing heavily parasitised lambs falling over with large *Trichostrongylus* burdens, in many cases only three to four weeks after a drench, so stay vigilant till winter arrives. The atypical mild conditions have also brought a few late cases of facial eczema, ryegrass staggers and viral pneumonia in lambs - one Taumarunui farm having lost around 100 of 1500 lambs to this.

Shearing ewes in winter

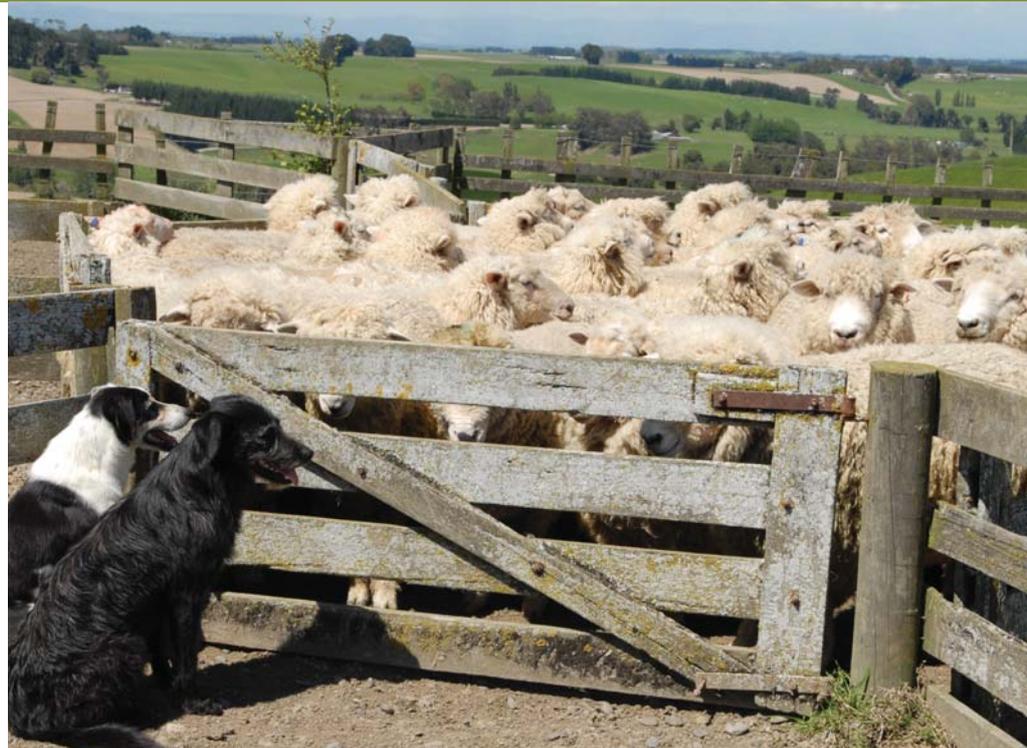
Trevor Cook

The benefits of shearing ewes in the winter, regardless of the value of the wool, are reported to be many, some of which are based on science, but most are based on anecdotal evidence and observations. This does not detract from their validity.

Trials show that shearing a pregnant ewe between 50 and 100 days of pregnancy will increase the birth weight of the lambs born by about 0.25 kg. This is as long as the ewe is not skinny. Given that any birth weight advantage is usually doubled by weaning, an expected outcome from that winter shear is lambs being 0.5 kg heavier at weaning. But for many hill country lambs to be 0.25 kg heavier could well push a number up into a higher lamb survival status.

There is some trial data that shows that winter shorn ewes have fewer bearings. Fewer cast ewes before lambing is a very commonly experienced outcome, but actual trial data quantifying it is scarce. Fewer metabolic diseases in winter shorn ewes is another commonly reported outcome, but again, not quantified at all.

Other reported benefits are easier winter management, removing the need for a pre-lamb crutch/belly and easier pre-lamb



vaccinating. Ewes being in better condition at weaning is an outcome reported that really needs to be tested. A big benefit that is rarely acknowledged is that the date of weaning is not being driven by the need to shear ewes. Weaning date for the best outcome should be driven by a combination of the feed conditions, expected feed conditions ahead and the market. On many annual summer-shorn flocks weaning is very much driven by a need to shear ewes.

There are costs to winter shearing. Ewes need to be fed more. Their increased appetite due to shearing is only for two or three days, but to protect them from bad weather they need to be fed more for longer than that. Additionally, there can be real management complications trying to get ewes dry in the winter. Well planned winter rotations can be really

disrupted. This is a cost that is often lost in the other factors influencing production outcomes, but being in control of winter feeding is one of the most important points of influence.

In general the benefits of winter shearing outweigh the costs. But for those benefits to be more reliable some basics must be covered. Taking ewe condition into the winter is vital, just as is planning the feed supply for the winter that takes into account a higher feed demand for a week at some stage. Also important is planning the paddock use so that known safer paddocks are available for grazing immediately after shearing.

Factors that will reduce the weather risks are to use a cover comb, not shear late into the afternoon and of course have feed immediately available. Access to shelter is essential as well.



Animal welfare matters

Ryan Carr

The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill passed its final reading on 5th May 2015. This means that in 12 to 18 months there will likely be tangible differences in minimum standards of animal welfare, intended to strengthen the protection of ALL animals.

As such, we were recently approached by DairyNZ to give seminars focusing on animal welfare. At first I was reluctant to get involved. It is not exactly an exciting topic and it can be quite uncomfortable to talk about. However, after thinking about it and going through the material, I was quickly convinced that it is something we should be talking about, A LOT! The reasons why are:

1. Public perception. Everyone has read the articles written about cases of poor animal welfare on farms. They are often

written in emotional, provocative language and stir up strong reactions in the public, regardless of whether they are fair and accurate or not. If you have not seen the ad for the recent campaign by PETA to dissuade people from buying wool products you should Google it. This is the sort of thing the dairy, sheep, beef and deer industries are up against.

2. Market access. Both overseas governments and large food companies set rules around the quality of the products they import/buy, as well as the way in which they are produced. Failing to meet the rules around animal welfare, set by the people who buy our products, means we can miss out on huge markets. These governments and large corporations are increasing their requirements around animal welfare all the time. If New Zealand (NZ) is found to fall short it will have huge consequences.

3. The law. There are laws set in NZ and other countries to protect the welfare of animals and breaching these laws has consequences. An individual that is found guilty of breaching the Animal Welfare Act

1999 is liable to a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or up to five years in prison.

4. It is the right thing to do. The animals we work with to provide our livelihoods deserve to have certain needs met and to be free from a certain level of pain and distress. It is the right thing to do to have good standards of animal welfare.

Whether or not we like what is happening in the industry around animal welfare requirements it is the world we live in and must sell product to! Having said all that I am confident that 99% of farmers care for their stock and aim to have good standards of welfare.

In terms of ensuring that you are covered as far as regulators such as Ministry of Primary Industries, Fonterra, and overseas markets are concerned there are some easy, simple things you can do to make sure that animal welfare standards on your farm are good and that you have the ability to prove it.

To find out more and/or to arrange a training session for you and your staff, talk to your vet or call Ryan or Leisa at our Awapuni clinic on 06 356 5011.

Gossip

Congratulations to **Helen Sheard**, and her husband **Hayden**, on the arrival of baby Lachlan Wynn Sheard (Lachie) born 5th May at 10:07am, 8lb 11oz. Both mum and baby are doing very well and the whole team at Totally Vets wish them well on their journey into parenthood!

Mid May saw **Debby Ritchie**, our Human Resources Manager, take a well earned break

overseas spending time with family and friends in England. While last month saw **Allie Quinn** return from her year away in Vietnam, with staff and clients alike all thrilled to have her back. **Carol McCraw** also returned from spending nearly a month off with her daughter who has been back visiting from Australia. Her month included a trip back to her old stomping grounds in West Otago and Southland, which may or may not have included running out of fuel in the Catlins!?

Taumarunui had a very well attended farewell BBQ for much-loved **Hannah Lord** at the end of May as she embarks on a new career hands-on dairying. Hannah is known to be pretty fit anyway but, after two months of intensive gym work, she is now strong and fit enough to lift two calves at a time into the trailer come calving time!

Meanwhile at Awapuni, May saw the start of the new Clinic Manager, **Rochelle Speirs**. We are excited to have her on board as part of the

Will Theileria be a risk this calving?

Greg Smith

Last spring further cases of Theileria were confirmed in previously unaffected herds. The number of affected herds is still low as are, for the most part, the number of cases reported per herd.

This is in keeping with the Manawatu's status as an unstable area, meaning the prevalence of Theileria is expected to remain at low to moderate levels. However each year the number of cases will be unpredictable as variations in seasonal factors will increase or decrease the risk of disease. In general cases of clinical Theileria will be sporadic, i.e. few in number, but some herds will experience an outbreak involving several cases. This unpredictability will be the pattern of disease in the longer term and reflects the fluctuating tick population in unstable areas.

In years where seasonal factors favour ticks the risk of Theileria will increase. However it is important to note that the presence of ticks alone does not guarantee Theileria is present, just that the means to spread Theileria is present.

Introduction of Theileria via cattle movements from higher risk areas such as the Hawkes Bay, Waikato and Taranaki are behind most cases



observed to date. In particular properties with a history of wintering dry cows in the higher risk areas has been the most common factor associated with the emergence of Theileria. However one case involving heifers grazed at a Manawatu property probably resulted from exposure to beef animals brought in from multiple locations to the same grazing block. The heifers developed Theileria after calving but no cases were reported in the older cows indicating there was clinical evidence of spread on the milking platform.

Cattle movement is a key risk factor. Firstly, cattle can carry infected ticks between different locations and secondly, once infected, cattle will carry the disease in their blood for several months. Thus infected animals transported to another location can spread the disease to a previously Theileria free tick population at the new location, if a tick population exists. Either way the proliferation of the disease at the new location requires ticks and conditions favourable for ticks.

If your herd is currently Theileria free it is advised to take steps to remain that way. The most obvious risk is wintering-off of dry cows in higher risk areas, so avoid this if possible. If

this is unavoidable, minimise the risk by use of tickacides. A treatment prior to transportation back from grazing coincides with increased tick feeding behaviour (ticks tend to go in to a rest phase in late autumn and early winter) and prevents ticks from hitching a ride back to the milking platform! A second treatment four weeks later, before the effect of the first treatment wears off, will provide protection to the herd during the important calving period. This is valuable because the effects of Theileria are worst for animals affected at calving or during early lactation. At other times when animals are under less stress the symptoms are less severe and may not even be noticed.

If a herd is unlucky enough to experience an outbreak affecting several cows it is important to develop a plan to diagnose cases as early as possible and triage affected animals for appropriate treatment. In the early stages veterinary input will be necessary to confirm the diagnosis and to assist staff with selecting the best treatment. The worst cases will require a blood transfusion but the majority will respond well to supportive therapy. The establishment of a sick mob that is milked once daily, is kept close to the shed to minimise walking distance, and is handled carefully to minimise stress is the core of management. Affected cows will likely require two to three weeks in this mob before they are ready to re-join the main herd. Risk of calving difficulties and metritis are greatly increased and hence monitoring and prompt action at any sign of trouble is also important.

If you have concerns about Theileria in your herd and/or would like further information then call your vet today to discuss your individual situation.

Totally Vets team and look forward to seeing her on the indoor netball court as a member of our newly formed Totes Amaze team. **Colin Wakelin**, having transferred from Awapuni, is now a permanent fixture in Taumarunui, and we suspect that **Roy** is probably enjoying the slight shift in the gender balance.

Congratulations to our Face-Guard™ BBQ winners, **Brian Guy** and **Ian Ritchie**. These great Webers are perfect for throwing into the car for a Barbie at the beach.



Brian Guy



Ian Ritchie



The value of post-mortems

Hamish Pike

The value of a dying or dead animal can be salvaged to some small extent if information can be gained from the process, particularly in a sheep and beef operation.

Increased stock losses, the dead and/or the missing, can have a major effect on the overall operating profit of a farm. If lambing (docking) percentage is defined as the number of lambs docked divided by the number of ewes multiplied by 100, then it doesn't take many pregnant ewe deaths, especially those carrying multiples, to start to impact on the final docking percentage. Eight percent ewe deaths equates to about 160 lambs lost per 1000 ewes carrying multiples.

We know that the more lambs you can get out the farm gate the greater the profit. Lamb prices and the weather are generally out of our control, so we should put all of our efforts into the things that we can control. Things such as feeding ewes and cows well at crucial times during pregnancy, prioritising of 'lighter' conditioned stock and ensuring multiple bearing ewes don't lose condition pre-lamb etc.

Knowing where your ewes are disappearing to, or what they are dying of, and the numbers, is also very important as to avoid further losses in the future.

We should never just assume that most of the losses can be attributed to a certain disease without doing our homework first. Assumption nearly always leads to a misdiagnosis and the administration of ineffectual treatments. This leads to further deaths, frustration and more costs before a correct diagnosis and treatment can be administered.

Post-mortem examinations are relatively cheap and are an efficient way of taking out

some of the guess work. Usually a tentative diagnosis can be made on the spot but sometimes samples may need to be sent to the lab to confirm a diagnosis. On the odd occasion when a diagnosis is not found the information gained still gives invaluable insight into the disease process within an animal, if not the actual reason(s) for it.

Decomposition and post-mortem change begins immediately following death so post-mortems should be treated as urgent if the maximum knowledge is to be learnt from them. Often we do not know how long the outbreak will persist, and whether or not one death will be followed by another and so on. However, we can control this if we have the right information.

Depending on the size of the animal, post-mortems can either occur at the clinic, on-farm or by arrangement at Wallace Corporation after skins have been removed. From there we can best advise you on what steps you will need to take in order to prevent further losses.

Pre-lamb iodine

Juan Klue

Iodine deficiency in ewes can lead to reduced wool production, decreased twinning

rates, decreased birth weights and increased newborn lamb mortalities.

When ewes are severely low in iodine lambs are born with enlarged thyroid glands (goitre) which can be seen as a swelling under the throat. Some of these lambs are born alive but many are born dead.

Iodine deficiency tends to occur in high rainfall areas, including the Manawatu, while most occurrences of goitre seem to be associated with feeding ewes brassica plant species during the winter. Brassicas, as well as some cultivars of clover, contain high levels of goitrogens which block the uptake of inorganic iodide by the thyroid gland.

A newborn lamb needs to have a properly functioning thyroid gland to help with energy

Transition time... the Vital 90™ days!

Lindsay Rowe

Traditionally the period from three to four weeks either side of calving has been considered the transition period - the period where as much as 80% of the herd's disease costs are generated and where up to 4% of cows are culled from the herd as a consequence of problems arising at this time.

We are now being encouraged to think of this as a 90 day period extending from 60 days prior to calving through to 30 days following calving. For the dairy cow, numerous changes are occurring as they prepare to dry off and then set up for another birth and then a fresh lactation, these being:

- The cessation of milking at dry-off
- Changes in their environment and their ration
- Rapid foetal growth
- A decline in dry matter (DM) intake just prior to calving
- The start of colostrum production
- Rapid changes in blood hormonal levels
- The process of giving birth
- A rapid increase in milk production

This period, when managed well, can set the scene for top milk yields and maximum fertility but, managed poorly, can severely limit

potential production and will adversely affect herd fertility.

The key aims of the transition period, particularly pre-calving, are to:

1. Adapt the rumen to the milking diet and reduce rumen disruption. This will improve the energy and protein metabolism of the recently calved cow.
 - The rumen will take up to six weeks to fully adapt but introducing the ingredients that will be in the post calving diet, such as maize silage and/or palm kernel, from three weeks before calving will start this process before the real pressure comes on.
 - The use of Rumensin® from this time and through the early part of the lactation is likely to provide an added lift in the energy efficiency of the rumen.
2. Reduce macro-mineral (calcium, magnesium, phosphorus) deficiencies at the onset of lactation.
 - For every milk fever (low blood calcium) case that you treat there will be 15 or 16 other cows in the herd also affected. This will trigger a reduction in appetite and ultimately lead to a loss in production and reduced fertility. Accurate addition of macro minerals to the transition diet is crucial to success.
3. Boost the immune system
 - Generally a cow with an adequate intake of energy and protein will effectively resist disease but for some individuals, where intakes are compromised or where production levels are very high, there may be value in boosting their mineral and vitamin status.

- Early trials of a new product on the market, Imrestor™, indicate that, used strategically, it can boost a cow's immune status with a consequent reduction in mastitis following calving. A slight improvement in fertility is also likely.
4. Careful management of DM intake before calving
 - Typically the DM intake of the cow decreases dramatically in the week leading up to calving and it can take up to 12 weeks after calving before reaching peak intake again.
 - This situation can be improved by getting the cows as close as possible to their calving target body condition score (BCS) by drying-off or very early in the dry period.
 - If a cow has achieved BCS of at least 4.5 by the time she is drafted into the transition mob, current wisdom now indicates she will benefit from receiving slightly less than a maintenance intake in the final two weeks - this gives an early kick start to her energy mobilising system and can better prepare her for the coming lactation. However take care with this approach!
 5. Set up the cow for an early positive energy balance so she has significant ovarian activity and an obvious expression of heat with a good conception rate.

Given the number of tools now available, such as diet checking software programmes and cow-side and laboratory tests for blood, liver and feed stuffs, this period can now be managed with much more accuracy than in the past - talk it over with your vet sometime soon.

production and heat retention in its first days of life. This requires the ewe to have a certain base level of iodine in her system from mid-pregnancy onwards, but especially around day 70, when the foetal thyroid is developing. Remember, to maximise ewe and lamb survival during lambing, ewes still need to be well fed and in good condition before lambing.

The most cost efficient way to prevent iodine deficiency is to drench ewes with potassium

iodide eight and four weeks pre-lambing at between \$0.07 to \$0.10 cents per dose. The second dose can tie in with pre-lamb vaccinations. However, field experience suggests that if you are wishing to dose the ewes once only, treating mid-pregnancy at scanning is better than treating closer to lambing.

Drenching ewes with a product called Healthy Ewe (contains iodine, vitamins and minerals)

at around \$0.18 cents per dose at the same regime as above is also an option. Alternatively injecting ewes with a long acting iodine product one month before mating called Flexidine™ at around \$0.90 cents per dose. If feeding a winter brassica crop, Flexidine™ should be administered to ewes at least two months prior to feeding.

Call your vet today to discuss what option is best for your farm.

Are you prepared to take a hit?



One shot could save a hiding

Scours can knock you sideways – hurting your calves, your family and your income. And it can strike on any farm. With Rotavec® Corona, a single shot before calving helps protect your calves against three of the most common causes of infectious scours – rotavirus, coronavirus and *E. coli*. **Talk to your vet today about Rotavec Corona – the easy, one shot way to help your calves stand up to scours.**



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