



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

JULY 2016



Win a camera with Totally Vets!

Gaye Stein

Entries are now being taken for the Totally Vets photo competition. Take part to have a chance to win some great prizes for both you and your school, and have your photo in our 2017 calendar!

Details for entry include:

- Entrants are to be of primary or intermediate school age (years one to eight).
- Entrants can submit up to three photos.
- Photos are to be farm or animal themed.
- Great prizes are up for grabs, with the top prize winner taking home a Panasonic Lumix camera. Extra prizes go to the top three entrant's schools.

Entry forms with full terms and conditions can be downloaded from our website www.totallyvets.co.nz, picked up from your nearest clinic, or can be requested by emailing Gaye.Stein@tvgn.co.nz.

Colostrum

Karen Woodley

Colostrum is something we hear lots about and for VERY good reason!

WHAT IS IT?

Colostrum is often referred to as "liquid gold". It is the highly concentrated nutrient and immunoglobulin rich first milk produced in the udder. Milk from the second through eighth milking is 'transitional milk' and is of progressively lesser quality. Calves get only minimal transfer of immunoglobulins (because they are large proteins) across the placenta so a newborn calf must get them via the colostrum. They are essential in helping protect the calf from infections in the first few weeks of life.

COLOSTRUM QUALITY

Colostrum quality varies considerably between cows and is influenced by numerous things including breed, age, body condition score, dry period length, volume of colostrum produced, leaking prior to calving (for example if internal teat sealants have not been used) and time to first milking. Use of pre-calving vaccinations, such as Rotavec® Corona or ScourGuard® 4KC, can be given that act to greatly boost the colostrum immunoglobulin levels. Quality of colostrum can be measured in the field by using a 'Brix refractometer' and/or by testing at the lab.

WHEN TO FEED COLOSTRUM?

A calf can absorb immunoglobulins from colostrum for only a very short time after birth. Even at 12 hours old the absorption has declined considerably. Current recommendations are that calves should have received two feeds of at least two litres of first milking colostrum by 12 hours after birth. This means collecting calves from and/or feeding them in the paddock twice daily.

CAN I STORE COLOSTRUM?

Yes! Ideally aim to keep colostrum from a cow's FIRST milking separate for a calf's feeds in those first 12 or so "golden" hours, and then also go on to store colostrum from her second to fourth or fifth milkings for future use.

Collect it as cleanly as possible to minimise bacterial contamination as it will reduce its quality. Ideally it should be refrigerated at 4°C in which case it will keep for up to seven days. Colostrum keepers can be added to extend storage time but please note they will NOT stop bacterial growth in colostrum stored at room temperatures. For longer term storage colostrum can be frozen in a deep freeze but great care must be taken when thawing (such as use of water bath NOT microwave!) so as not to destroy the goodness.

For further information talk to your vet and get a plan in place for the season before your first calf hits the ground!

Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for July include ...

Dairy

- **Transition management** - the three weeks prior to calving are a critical time in the preparation for the lactation ahead. Keep an eye on cow condition as calving approaches and adjust cow intakes as appropriate.

Ensure that you have a structured transition plan in place, particularly in regards to magnesium supplementation.

- **Calf shed preparation** - clean out and have a good look over your sheds so they're in tip-top shape in plenty of time before calving. Having a "calf management plan" will mean expectations are clear and everyone is on the same page, particularly important when it comes to calf collection and colostrum management - **article P1**.

Additionally, ensure you are up to speed with the new regulations regarding bobby calves.

- **Spring preparation** - grab some metabolics to have on hand, clean and organise calving gear, hold a team meeting to discuss the approach to calving - **article P3**.

Sheep and Beef

- **Iodine supplementation of ewes** - preventative treatment is best given at



Up close and personal with foot-and-mouth disease

PART ONE

Leisa Norris

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that can affect all cloven hooved animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, deer and alpacas.

In May this year I was privileged to be part of a group of ten New Zealand (NZ) veterinarians to visit Nepal, as part of the European Commission for the Control of FMD (EuFMD) Real Time Training Course, and got up close and personal with FMD in the flesh.

FMD is exotic to NZ but if it were to make its way here the effects on our farming industry and economy as a whole would be extremely damaging. Direct losses include decreased milk production and the cost of animals slaughtered,

however the indirect losses, primarily that of loss of trade, would likely have the most significant impact.

The most recent notable outbreak of FMD was in United Kingdom in 2001. There were 2000 cases of FMD diagnosed on farms and more than 10 million sheep and cattle were slaughtered. By the time the outbreak was halted it was estimated to have cost eight billion pounds.

The incubation for FMD is up to 14 days, though is generally two to five days. It is transmitted by:

- direct and indirect contact between infected animals - virus is shed in milk, urine, faeces, blood and ruptured vesicles
- contaminated animal products, people, equipment, vehicles
- airborne transfer

FMD is rarely fatal but can be debilitating during the course of the disease resulting in weight loss and/or abortion. Cattle are the easiest animals in which to identify the disease, conversely in sheep the disease is far more subtle and could easily be missed. There is a marked drop in milk production and clinical signs include increased salivation, high fever,

blisters/ulcers in the mouth and/or on the feet (with resulting lameness) and teats. Large numbers of animals are generally affected, and history of overseas visitors/travel or imports to your farm would raise a red flag.

If ever introduced to NZ, early recognition of FMD would be vital. The longer it was to go unnoticed here the greater the risk of a large scale outbreak. Part of my role in the veterinary profession is as an Initial Investigating Veterinarian forASUREQuality who is contracted to provide such vets by Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). If a call is made to the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Reporting Hotline **0800 80 99 66** then I go out to examine the animal(s) to determine if there is an exotic disease present or not.

If you come across a disease that is unusual or suspect the presence of an exotic disease then don't ever hesitate to phone the 0800 number! See September's newsletter for PART TWO and an insight into my once in a lifetime trip to Nepal

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eight and four weeks pre-lambing if not having been done earlier. Have a discussion with your vet as to which option (eg oral potassium iodide or iodine injection) would best suit you and your flock.

- **Winter ewe management** - monitor body condition score of ewes as winter progresses - if under or over-conditioned there may be problems come lambing time. Consider mid-winter shearing and plan for pre-lamb vaccinations.

Equine

- **Clipping** - plan to clip by start of August to save your horse's summer coat.
- **Lice** - be sure to monitor for lice so, if present, you can catch the problem early. Turned out horses need checking regularly, including removal of rugs to check body condition and for any problems such cover rubs or lice.

- **Wet weather** - can be the cause of nasty foot abscesses due to damage to the structural integrity of hooves, so keep an eye out for any signs of lameness and get any problems checked out quickly. Wet conditions can also result in a number of skin infections/irritations. If caught early most conditions are cheaply and easily treated.

Preparing for spring

Craig Dickson

For most it has been a tough season both physically and mentally. Hopefully, despite the short term hiccups, you share with us the belief that the dairy industry has a great future.

Below is a check list of some key areas to consider before the hustle of spring descends:

PEOPLE:

- Remember they are your biggest asset.
- Have a break before spring arrives.
- Take the time to involve the staff in discussions around what your expectations are for the coming season. Ensure that each staff member is aware of what their role is in achieving these goals.
- If there are gaps in the knowledge base of some of your staff invest some time in correcting these.
- Plan a roster for the busy spring period in advance. Days are often long and hard so be realistic about your expectation of staff around this time. Nobody performs at their best when placed in an environment of long term stress and long hours. Take time to recharge the batteries.



- Despite the hectic pace of spring take the time throughout to have regular team meetings. This is a great environment to reward, encourage and resolve.

COWS AND CALVES:

- Continue vigilance around mastitis in dried off cows. Remember dry season mastitis needs to be treated with a lactational antibiotic product not dry cow therapy.
- Monitor body condition and don't forget the young stock.
- Assess parasite status and consider drenching options.
- Monitor trace element levels and address any issues.
- Devise a plan around magnesium supplementation in close up cows. Aim to have all cows supplemented for at least three weeks prior to calving. Where possible use more than one supplementation option.

FARM AND PLANT:

- Have the functioning of the milking machine checked. Assess rubber-ware and replace if it exceeds the manufacturers recommendations.

- Ensure that the teat sprayer is functioning correctly.
- Get the calf pens cleaned out and new bedding organised.
- Ensure that all water troughs are working and not leaking.
- Take the time to run the heifers through the shed. Your efforts will be greatly rewarded once they start calving. Consider teat sealing heifers if you have a history of heifer mastitis.
- Check that the calving kit is complete - jack/pulley, lube, ropes, disinfectant.
- Have a supply of metabolic treatments on hand - despite your best efforts of getting the transition right you are bound to have a handful of down cows.

Finally, the much higher than normal facial eczema risk in the region this year may have some consequences come spring. On some farms there will likely be cows that were sub-clinically affected that will struggle with the stresses of the calving process. Be mindful of this and talk to your vet if you think this may be the case or if a problem arises.

Nitrate toxicity

Juan Klue

Nitrate is naturally present within plants and generally doesn't cause issues however, given the right set of circumstances, it can be a life threatening problem. All commercially farmed ruminant species (cattle, sheep, deer and goats) are susceptible.

Nitrate is taken up by plants from the soil and is converted into protein for plant growth. Under certain growing conditions these levels can build up high enough to be dangerous to grazing animals that can die from lack of oxygen supply. These conditions include drought followed by rain, cloudy weather with active growth and the addition of nitrogenous fertilizer. Plants that have been associated with nitrate problems include rape, choumoellier, turnips, ryegrass (particularly new grass and short rotation Italian types), wheat, barley, sorghum and oats.



When animals graze plants high in nitrate, nitrite builds up and binds to the haemoglobin in the blood. This interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen and turns the blood a brownish colour. Symptoms generally occur within one to twenty four hours following ingestion, and range from sudden death through to increased breathing rate, gasping, increased heart rate, incoordination and salivation.

If you are concerned that this profile fits your animals, remove them from the offending material quickly but quietly, and call your vet immediately. This is one toxicity for which we have a specific antidote and, if given early, methylene blue can minimise losses.

However, as always, prevention is better than cure! If you have paddocks that you are concerned about, bring in a supermarket bag of the suspect feed to your nearest clinic to send for laboratory testing. Nitrate levels can be analysed and we can give you advice on how safe it is to feed.

There are several management strategies that can be employed to reduce the risk of grazing potentially dangerous crops or pastures. These are essentially concerned with reducing the time grazing these paddocks, managing the amount of gut-fill prior to being introduced onto the paddock or new break, grazing in the afternoon rather than morning, and careful observation.

If you have any concerns, or would like further information, give your vet a call.

Pour-on drench options from \$3.49* per cow

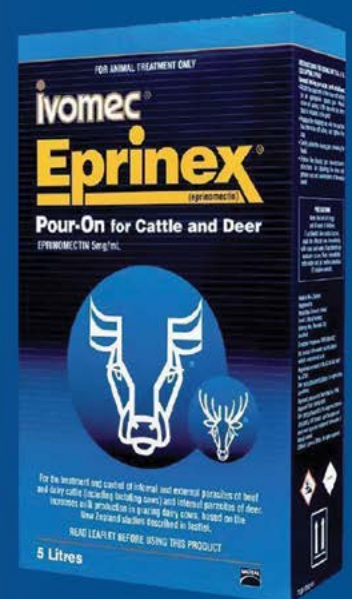
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5L - \$495.00
25L - \$2725.00
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with FREE WAECO 55L Icebox - value \$295

EPRISURE™ Pour-On

5L - \$410.00
20L - \$1395.00



*Based on a 500kg cow.

While stocks last and for a limited time only. Nil milk and bobby calf withholding period. Prices include GST.