



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

AUGUST 2016



## Let's talk teeth

**Helen Sheard**

Working dogs are less prone to dental disease than the small white fluffies we usually see, however they can have problems with fractured teeth, either from stock work or chewing bones.

If tooth fractures expose the pulp (the red centre carrying the nerves and blood vessels) there is risk of infection which can occur weeks to months after the initial injury. Reluctance to eat, facial swelling, discharging wounds below the eye, and/or being head-shy can all be signs of teeth problems.

**This August is dental month which means there is 20% off dental procedures all month - book in at Feilding or Taumarunui to get your best employee checked out!**

## Managing “dirty” cows

**Sarah Anderson**

Whilst calving may be in full swing, it is important to look ahead to mating - endometritis in the postpartum period can affect up to 10-20% of a herd, leading to poorer reproductive outcomes, including reduced submission rates, conception rates and six week in-calf rate.

Endometritis is a chronic infection of the uterus post-calving that is usually treated locally via intra-uterine antibiotics. It can occur in any cow but in certain circumstances a cow may be considered “at-risk”, that is, to be predisposed to developing the disease.

At-risk cows are those that had:

- Assisted calving
- Retained fetal membranes
- Twins
- Abortion
- Premature calving
- Metabolic disease

These events should be recorded as they occur, so that all at-risk cows can be identified.

However the at-risk group are, unfortunately, not the end of the story - up to two thirds of cows with endometritis may be outside of this group. Metri-checking (using the metri-check device to detect pus within the vagina) of the whole herd is recommended to ensure that no infected cows are missed – those identified as testing positive can then be treated.

The timing of metri-checking is crucial, with three to four weeks post calving being optimal. If done too early (less than two weeks after calving) we may treat infections which are on the way to self-resolving. If done too late (greater than four weeks after calving) the cervix closes and pus may not be detected in the vagina despite infection being present in the uterus. Four weekly “batches” of cows due to be metri-checked can easily be identified by simply tail painting all cows post-calving with one paint colour for the first four weeks of the calving period, then a different colour the next four weeks and so on.

Alternatively, a compromise could be either treating all at-risk cows with intra-uterine antibiotics as a matter of course OR just metri-checking the at-risk cow group every four weeks AND then checking the whole herd at a set time at least four weeks before the planned start of mating. This method may result in fewer dirty cows being detected, but may be more practical in some situations.

**Contact your vet to discuss metri-checking of your herd - ensure that your cows have the best chance of getting in calf this season!**

# Looking ahead

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

## Dairy

- **Metabolics** - hopefully you have a successful transition plan in place that has minimised the occurrence of any "down" cows. In particular keep up the magnesium

supplementation to help avoid any "staggers" cows.

- **Calf management** - excellent hygiene practices are essential and must be maintained throughout the whole season, particularly as calf numbers increase and pressure comes on both calf shed(s) and the people working in them. Also make sure to plan ahead for disbudding so the critical window between four to eight weeks is not missed - **article P3**.

- **"At-risk" cows** - thinking of mating whilst still in the heat of calving is hard but how you manage your at-risk cows in the month after calving can have a significant impact on their future fertility - **article P1**.

- **Early season mastitis** – **article P2**.

## Sheep and Beef

- **Lambing time** - observation, early detection and intervention to help those

# Early season mastitis

Allie Quinn

Each season it seems that unpredictable weather systems add to the challenges of farming and "hoping for the best but planning for the worst" appears to be a common and prudent strategy for coping!

Having effective strategies in place to PREVENT, FIND and TREAT mastitis, no matter what the spring conditions are, is also vital. The following are some key points for controlling early season mastitis:

- Ideally, springers will be calving on 'clean' pasture however we know that it doesn't always work that way! Many farmers will already have strategically used dry cow treatment (DCT) and/or an internal teat sealant to help manage the mastitis risk. For springers, teat spraying two to three times weekly can be an excellent option to help decrease the challenge.

- After calving – aim to get cows milked within nine to twelve hours post calving. This practice alone can reduce mastitis dramatically, especially in first calvers.
- Teat-spray, teat-spray, teat-spray! Effective teat spraying can reduce new mastitis cases by around 50% so it is worth getting it right. Cover every teat every milking and ensure you use the recommended spring teat-spray dilution rate.
- Teat-spray needs to be "fresh" so only ever mix enough for two to three days and use dedicated measuring jugs. Aim to use 10-15% glycerine in your spring mix as glycerine helps improve the stickiness of the teat-spray and also helps maintain good skin condition. This is especially important in wet conditions as mud on teats can result in them becoming dry, cracked and prone to infection.
- Check all colostrum cows for clinical mastitis by stripping foremilk of all quarters at least once daily.
- Check for both clinical and subclinical mastitis before putting colostrum cows in the vat. There are a variety of methods in use – a Rapid Mastitis Test (RMT) paddle

and solution is the most common. If the cow has a strong positive RMT in one or more quarters, keep her out of the vat and check her history. Did she have DCT for a high cell count last season or previous mastitis treatment? This information may help you decide whether you should treat her or eat her!

- Take milk samples using an aseptic (clean) technique. Milk sampling can usually provide a preliminary result within 24 hours. It is valuable and important to know what bacteria are causing mastitis in your herd. Use the information to help decide:
  - which treatment to use (if any)
  - whether an extended course of treatment is recommended
  - whether a contagious bacteria is involved
  - whether making the cow a three titter or culling may be the best option
- Most importantly, having trained staff that follow clear procedures can have a big impact on mastitis management. Make use of the excellent resources, such as the Healthy Udder and SmartSAMM tools – available from DairyNZ.



**For more information on managing mastitis – from staff training to milk sampling to support with treating clinical cases – give your vet a call!**

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in trouble before (issues such as bearings and metabolic problems) and/or during the birth process is key to survival of both ewe and lamb(s). Management of ewes with multiples is also important – **article P4**.

- **Lamb vaccinations** - ensure your lambs are protected from Clostridial diseases come docking time and, where the history and risk warrant it, consider also vaccinating for scabby mouth.

- **Magnesium supplementation** - as with dairy cows (see above). Consider what supplementation option best suits your farm/ system.

## Equine

- **Nutrition** - now is a good time to consider putting your horse onto a good mineral supplement (NutriMin® Horse or Platinum Performance™ Equine) to prepare for the coming season.

- **Foaling** - ensure that the "foaling box" (in what ever form that may take!) is ready and/or mares are in the paddocks in which they will foal - ideally four weeks prior to due date.

Additionally, make sure they have had their pre-foal vaccinations (may include shots for Tetanus, Strangles, Salmonella) four to six weeks before their due date.

# Calf management

Jo Purdie

With calves in the sheds again it's prudent to have a plan in place for management of calves, including planning for the timing of disbudding and vaccinations.

## DISBUDDING

It is most efficient and effective to disbud calves with a hot iron between four to eight weeks of age. Calves can be disbudded using sedation or awake in a calf crate. It is less stressful for calves (and humans!) using sedation. Studies have shown that calves disbudded using sedation and local anaesthetic drank more milk and grew significantly faster in the next two weeks than calves disbudded without any pain relief. Also note that calves need to be kept somewhere clean and dry for 24 hours after disbudding to prevent the wounds becoming infected.

## VACCINATIONS

All calves should receive vaccinations (such as Multine® 5-in-1 or Ultravac™) to protect them from Clostridial diseases such as tetanus and blackleg. They need two vaccinations given four weeks apart for the initial course, followed by a booster annually.

Alternatively, and most cost effectively, calves can be vaccinated with Ultravac® 7-in-1.



This contains the five Clostridial vaccines as well as two strains of Leptospirosis vaccines (*L. hardjo* and *L. pomona*). Lepto vaccinations need to be done as soon as possible, BEFORE calves are exposed to any infection risk.

Remember the vaccine only works as a preventative NOT a cure so, if calves are exposed to Lepto before being vaccinated, they can become carriers. 7-in-1 can be given as early as four weeks of age, so in many systems it can work well to give the first shot at disbudding. They need a booster four to six weeks later which MUST be given to ensure vaccine effectiveness. This means good record keeping is essential so that all mobs get their boosters when they need it!

Lepto vaccination only produces a reliable immune response for 12-13 months, so it is recommended to give calves a third shot when you do your annual herd Lepto vaccinations (generally in autumn), to 'line the calves up' with the rest of the herd.

## WHEN TO WEAN

A calf's rumen needs time to prepare for weaning so it is able to digest solid food. With this in mind, aim to wean calves based on pellet consumption rather than on age or weight. Provide good quality calf pellets (18-20% protein) from day one, as they are essential for rumen development. Begin monitoring pellet consumption at around six weeks of age and wean based on dry matter intake over three days in a row – Friesians should be eating 1.5-2 kilograms, and Jerseys should be eating 1-1.5 kilograms of meal per calf per day before they are weaned so as to avoid a growth check at this time.

**For further information and/or to develop a calf rearing management plan specific for your needs, don't hesitate to give your nearest clinic a call.**

# Another piece of the triplet survival puzzle?

Ginny Dodunski

Last autumn some of our Taumarunui sheep farmers attended a field day on one of the B+LNZ demonstration farms, where they had seen spectacular survival responses in triplet-bearing ewes given a 'cocktail' of metabolic treatments pre-lamb.

However the groups of treated and untreated ewes had been lambed in separate paddocks so there was no way to separate a response to the treatments from the paddock effect.

We wanted to repeat the comparison but lamb the treated and untreated ewes together.

Meringa Station decided to have a crack at it, and this is what we did...

- Ewes were drafted into year groups ensuring equivalent body condition across each group, then half of each group was treated.
- Treated ewes were given:
  - Injectable vitamin A,D and E (Hideject™).
  - Magnesium pidolate oral drench (Moremag™).
  - Long acting vitamin B12 injection (Smartshot™) as this is cobalt-deficient pumice country.

The two and three year old ewes were lambed in small flat paddocks. No ewes died and there was no difference in lamb survival between treated and untreated ewes.

The four to six year old ewes were lambed as one mob in a rolling hill block. There was a 16% death rate in the untreated ewes and a 6% death rate in the treated ewes. This was not quite statistically significant - but it sounds good doesn't it!



There was 11% better lamb survival from the treated ewes and, even when the dead ewes were removed from the analysis, there was still an advantage in lamb survival (treated ewes docked 229% in the paddock versus for the 219% untreated).

This work was supported by B+LNZ FITT funding and if you'd like to read the full report it is available at [www.beeflambnz.com/Documents/Farm/FITT-Meringa-Triplet-Study.pdf](http://www.beeflambnz.com/Documents/Farm/FITT-Meringa-Triplet-Study.pdf)

The repeatability of these results may well differ if studies were conducted on other farms and it would be good to know which of the treatments is having the most effect – lots more questions so watch this space! In the meantime have a chat to one of our friendly sheep vets about your triplet ewe management.

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

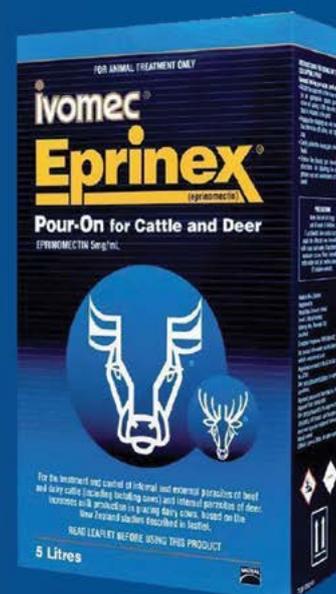
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\*Based on a 500kg cow.

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