



## Calf Weighing

This year Clutha Vets are offering a calf weighing service to monitor calf growth from post-weaning to pre-mating. We are trying to increase awareness of the importance of calf weighing and improve the value of your replacement heifers.

Currently in New Zealand, only 81% of heifers raised as calves enter the herd as 2 year olds and only 55% of heifers identified as replacements at birth survive to start a third lactation. These losses and the implications speak for themselves.

Properly grown heifers results in benefits to the dairy herd, including:

- improved fertility
- reduced age at first calving
- reduced calving difficulties
- increased milk production
- reduced culling rates of first lactation heifers.

Live weight and size are more important than age in determining when first oestrous and conception occurs in heifers. At 13-15 months of age, replacement heifers need to weigh approximately 65 to 70 percent of their mature weight in order to consistently breed.

After calving, well-grown heifers eat more forage and can tolerate more grain consumption and therefore have less risk of digestive or metabolic problems. Greater bodyweight at first calving due to feeding and management increases the milk yield.

Our aim, by monitoring weight gain, is to help you rear heifers that will conceive easily at 15 and 27 months of age, produce well in the first and subsequent lactations and have minimal animal health problems.

Our service involves:

- regular farm visits to weigh the calves using our weighing scales (by our Rural Animal Technician, Ainslie Watt)
- a written report on the results of weighing
- data analysis that makes it easy to monitor the performance of your calves

We will also provide ongoing advice as per usual and can perform drenching and blood testing for trace elements at the time of weighing if required.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this service please contact Teresa O'Riordan or Ainslie Watt at the Balclutha clinic – 03 418 1280.