



CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”

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Happy New Year! Hasn't it been great to see the sun for a couple of days in a row in early January? Hopefully you've been able to make the most of it, and enjoy the touch of summer - I'm sure you've heard the long range forecast for the next couple of months, with the El Nino pattern likely to take us back to the continued strong winds, and below normal temperatures & rainfall we had through October, November and December.

Having said that, most people seem to be quite well ahead in production (perhaps due to better grass quality when it was grazed hard because of short supply early on), and have plenty of grass on hand now. If you need to shut some up, don't underestimate the value of having a bit of old-fashioned good-quality hay(!) in the shed - it's an excellent fibre source to complement winter brassicas or the lush grass, molasses or grain fed in spring. Many of the run-off blocks are showing the first signs of the winter crop popping its head through.

Clinic News

It's pretty quiet around the practice at the moment, and most of us have been lucky enough to get a few days holiday over the Christmas / New Year period. With any luck, you will have been able to manage a few days too.

It looks like at least one dairy farmer may have won a place on the Ancare "Take a mate fishing" trip - details to be announced next month!

Mastitis Matters

A number of people have been enquiring about treating subclinically infected cows, based on herd test results. In some ways this makes sense - the only difference between clinical and subclinical mastitis is how hard you have to look to find it(!), and if they were clinical, they would definitely be treated. However, the cost effectiveness of treating subclinical mastitis varies, depending on the BMSCC, stage of lactation, age and production of the cow, type of infection, antibiotics used, and duration of treatment. For example, three days on Intracillin is unlikely to be successful (or cost effective) in an eight year old cow that has had a high cell count ever since a clinical case of mastitis last season, despite DCT at drying off last year! Please speak to a vet before treating high SCC cows, based purely on herd test results, to develop a plan that is likely to get the result you are seeking.

Reproduction

How did the early part of mating go? Not many returns? Are they pregnant, or have they gone back into anoestrous? You might like to consider early pregnancy testing for these animals, to give you an indication of what bull power is required, or how long to leave the boys out. We can preg test accurately from about five weeks, so cows that were served in the first four weeks of mating (two shots for early CIDR recipients), and have not cycled since, can be tested from week nine (ie preg test early in the New Year for a November 1st PSM).

Young stock - Your future

Growing calves have a high demand for copper. Unlike selenium, copper can be effectively stored in the body (liver), and so calves born from mothers with high copper status throughout pregnancy, and drinking mineralised water, may not require treatment for some time. Their current status can be assessed by blood test.

Copper can be supplemented by injection (CopperMax, or MultiMin – which contains zinc, manganese and selenium as well as copper), but the general feeling is that these injections are not altogether benign and are best avoided in young animals. Copper injection should not be given within six weeks of mating.

Copper bullets are a better option while calves are still manageable in size. They are slow-release, probably working over about 3 months. In general, a 10g bullet can be given in the first summer and second bullet (to compensate for increasing body size) can be given going into the winter.

PAR's (Prescription Animal Remedies)

A number of farmers are approaching (or have exceeded) the allowance of certain PARs that they were allocated at the "Health and Production" consultation in the Spring. This is usually because a disease has been more of a problem on the farm this season than would normally be expected (eg lameness, mastitis, retained membranes). It doesn't mean you can't have any more drugs, but does mean that you'll get a phone call from a vet, to see what situation has led to higher than expected drug usage, and if there is any way we can help you use fewer PAR's.

Health issue – Stopping magnesium supplementation (DON'T!)

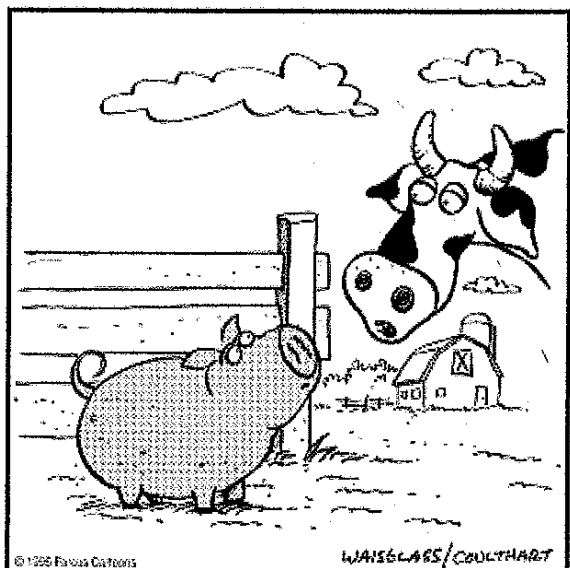
Everyone knows the importance of supplementing magnesium in the Spring to guard against metabolic disease and ensure optimal production. The question is, when should you stop? The theory is that as the mag and carbohydrate content of grass go up in summer, the need to supplement goes down. Also, in wet years, more potassium is leached from the soil and so the cows' relative demand for mag is less. Therefore, the rate can be reduced gradually – "once production has peaked, the mag supplementation rate can follow the milk curve downward".

Despite all that, we still see a few staggers related issues (including deaths) right through the season and this, combined with impaired milk production, makes it an expensive problem that is cheaply prevented. So we recommend a base level of magnesium supplementation right through until drying off.

If you do decide you need to stop completely, be ready to restart if you apply fertilizer. Heavy nitrogen application increases the leaching of mag from the soil and the K uptake of the grass, meaning pasture mag decreases and more mag supplementation may be required. Also, applying potash will result in less mag in the grass and especially if this co-incides with low feeding levels and foul weather, will necessitate upping the mag supplementation rate.

Reducing lameness - Neil Chesterton's yard management tip #4

Fit a timer to the forward switch of the backing gate, so that it can go for no more than 5 seconds in any single movement. Small, regular, predictable movements of the gate will cause a gentle ripple effect amongst the cows as they move forward towards the bails. Foot damage will be minimal, and lameness reduced.



"I'm going on holiday..... will you cover for me?"

This Month's Retail News

Has the Boxing Day rain seen a dramatic increase in lameness in your herd? Have you seen the latest version of the cowslip, the Demotec "Futura Pad"?

This one is a wooden block that is glued to the sole only (not the hoof walls), on the good claw of a lame cow to lift the sore claw off the ground. This allows it to heal faster and relieves a considerable degree of the pain associated with lameness – which is good from both welfare and production perspectives.

The beauty of these is that the glue comes in a single, ready to use bottle (no messy mixing!), and sets almost instantly and very reliably. They are about \$10 more expensive than the green or black versions, but save a great deal of hassle, time and frustration.